# Marxist Analysis of North Korea

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# The Birth of the Korean Revolution and Its Historical Conditions

Before the year 1945, Korea stood as one of the most oppressed lands of Asia, a territory bound in chains under Japanese imperialism. From 1910 until the defeat of Japan in the Second World War, Korea was annexed and transformed into a colony serving the needs of Japanese capital. The process that unfolded there was not only national subjugation, but also a brutal class reformation under foreign domination. The native ruling classes were largely absorbed into the imperial system, acting as intermediaries between the Japanese authorities and the Korean people, while the working class and the peasantry bore the full weight of exploitation.

Under Japanese occupation, Korea was turned into a source of cheap labor and raw materials. The countryside was ravaged by large-scale land concentration. Korean peasants, already impoverished before the annexation, were driven into tenancy under landlords loyal to Japan or directly under Japanese companies. Rice and other agricultural products were exported to Japan, leaving the peasantry in hunger. The Japanese state reorganized the Korean economy to serve imperial industry—building railways, mines, and factories, not to benefit the Korean people, but to enrich the empire. This created a new industrial working class, concentrated in heavy industry and mining, living in terrible conditions, without rights or organizations of their own.

The social composition of pre-liberation Korea was therefore a contradictory one. On one hand, there was the growing industrial proletariat, emerging in the cities of Pyongyang, Wonsan, and along the mining regions of the north. On the other hand, the majority of the population were impoverished peasants, bound by debt and tenancy. Above them stood the landlords, the comprador bourgeoisie, and the colonial bureaucracy, who represented the interests of Japanese imperialism. The national bourgeoisie—small industrialists and merchants—remained weak, dependent, and incapable of leading a genuine liberation struggle. The historical task of liberation therefore fell upon the working people themselves.

National oppression was total. The Korean language was banned in schools, newspapers were censored, and even the names of the people were forcibly Japanized. Cultural suppression went hand in hand with economic plunder. Every expression of Korean independence was punished by imprisonment or execution. Yet from these conditions of despair, a deep anti-imperialist consciousness began to grow among workers, peasants, and intellectuals. In the underground presses, in the small workers' groups, and in the peasant villages, the thought of Marx, Engels, and later Lenin began to circulate.

The 1919 March First Movement—a great uprising for independence—showed both the will of the people and the limits of spontaneous nationalism. It lacked the organized leadership of the working class. The failure of bourgeois nationalists to win liberation revealed that only through the organized strength of workers and peasants could real freedom be achieved. This

thought, later confirmed by Lenin's analysis of imperialism and the national question, would shape the Marxist understanding of Korea's future revolution.

During the 1920s and 1930s, small communist circles began to form, influenced by the Russian Revolution of 1917. Workers' organizations arose clandestinely under the constant persecution of the Japanese police. The early communist movement in Korea was repeatedly repressed, divided, and forced underground. Yet the essential idea—that liberation must be both national and social—took root. It became clear that independence without the destruction of the landlord and capitalist classes would only reproduce oppression in native form.

By the late 1930s, the revolutionary forces were fragmented, but the thought of Marxism-Leninism had already found followers among sections of Korean youth and workers. Many participated in the anti-Japanese guerrilla movement in Manchuria, where they encountered both nationalist and Stalinistic influences. This contact would later shape the distorted form of "communism" that appeared in the northern part of Korea after 1945.

Thus, before the end of the war, Korea was a nation torn by imperial exploitation and divided by class. Its working class had grown in number but had not yet achieved political leadership. The peasantry suffered under foreign landlords, while the small intelligentsia vacillated between nationalism and Marxism. These were the conditions under which anti-imperialist and workers' movements developed—rich in potential but lacking an authentic Leninist organization capable of uniting them under the banner of true proletarian revolution.

The stage was set: the collapse of Japanese imperialism would soon open the way for a new power to rise in Korea. Yet as will be shown in the following pages, the absence of a genuine Leninist vanguard and the interference of Stalinistic influence from outside would turn this historic opportunity into a new form of subjugation—a state built not on workers' rule, but on bureaucratic domination disguised in red banners.

The year 1945 brought the end of Japanese rule in Korea, yet liberation did not come from the conscious victory of the Korean working people themselves. It came as a result of the military collapse of Japan under the combined assault of the Soviet Union in the north and the United States in the south. This external character of liberation determined much of Korea's future tragedy. Instead of the people seizing power through their own organs—the soviets of workers and peasants envisioned by Lenin—the new authorities were imposed from above by foreign armies and bureaucracies.

When the Soviet troops entered the northern half of Korea in August 1945, they were greeted with enthusiasm by the population who believed that the end of imperial oppression meant the beginning of a free people's state. In the south, American forces occupied the peninsula below the 38th parallel. The division, agreed upon by the victorious powers, had no roots in the will of the Korean people. It was an act of imperial division, serving the interests of the emerging confrontation between capitalist and Stalinistic blocs. Thus the land that longed for unity under socialism was torn into two opposing systems before the workers could even raise their own banner.

In the northern zone, the Soviet administration immediately began to build a new governmental structure. On the surface, it appeared revolutionary: land reforms, nationalization of major industries, and the creation of people's committees. Yet in essence, it was a system modeled after Stalin's bureaucratic state. The committees were not true soviets of workers and peasants but organs under strict control of the Communist Party and Soviet advisers. The masses participated only as followers, not as rulers. The process of liberation therefore lacked the self-activity that Lenin had called the heart of the socialist revolution.

The Communist organizations that emerged were not born from the long internal development of the Korean proletariat but were reorganized and unified under Soviet guidance. In 1946, various leftist and nationalist groups in the northern zone were merged into the North Korean Workers' Party, which later united with southern communists to form the Korean Workers' Party in 1949. The guiding thought of this party was not Marxism-Leninism as a living revolutionary science, but the rigid dogma of Stalin's system—centralized control, suppression of debate, and obedience to authority. From the beginning, it was a party of administration rather than revolution, created from above by decree, not from below by the class struggle of the workers.

Kim Il Sung, who had fought as a guerrilla against Japan and had connections with Soviet military command, was promoted by Soviet authorities as the leading figure of the new regime. His rise was not the result of democratic selection by the working class but of external appointment. The Stalinistic model demanded one supreme leader as the embodiment of the party's authority. Thus began the formation of the personality cult that would later reach grotesque dimensions. The emphasis on one-man leadership already stood in opposition to Lenin's call for collective leadership, criticism within the party, and the unity of thought through discussion.

Soviet occupation also determined the economic and administrative system. Factories and mines previously owned by Japanese capitalists were nationalized, but the workers did not gain control over them. Management remained in the hands of appointed bureaucrats, many trained or directed by Soviet advisers. The state replaced private owners, but the relation of command and subordination remained unchanged. The working class was not the master of production; it became a disciplined instrument of state plans. This was not socialism in Lenin's sense, where workers take administration into their own hands, but a Stalinistic state economy.

In parallel, the People's Committees, which had initially arisen spontaneously across the country right after liberation, were dissolved or brought under party control. These committees, born from local initiative of peasants and workers, could have developed into genuine organs of people's power, the soviets of Korean socialism. Instead, the Soviet authorities and the emerging Korean leadership saw them as a threat to centralized command. Their independence was crushed, their members replaced with loyal cadres. The promise of Lenin's principle—"All power to the soviets!"—was extinguished before it could flower.

While the north took on this Stalinistic shape, the south fell under American occupation. Reactionary forces, landlords, and collaborators were restored, and any workers' or peasants'

organizations were destroyed. Thus, the division between north and south reflected not two forms of socialism and capitalism confronting each other, but two forms of domination—imperial and Stalinistic—each denying the self-rule of the Korean people.

By the end of the 1940s, the structure of power in the North Korean state had solidified into the same pattern that had developed in the Soviet Union under Stalin: a ruling party bureaucracy, a glorified leader, and a silenced proletariat. The people were told they were free, yet they had no means to exercise freedom. They were told they were rulers, yet they could not choose their rulers. The revolutionary potential born in the anti-imperialist struggle was thus captured and redirected into a new system of hierarchy.

The liberation of 1945, which could have opened the road toward true Marxist transformation, instead produced a new form of dependency—this time not colonial but bureaucratic. The Soviet Union withdrew in name, but its model remained. The revolutionary energy of the people was replaced by the obedience of the subject. The workers of Korea gained a flag but lost their voice.

After 1945, when the foreign occupation armies divided the peninsula and the new state began to take shape in the north, the decisive weakness of the Korean revolutionary process appeared: the working people were not organized as the masters of their own destiny. In the early months after liberation, many local committees of peasants, workers, and former resistance fighters arose spontaneously across the country. In a number of cities and villages, these committees seized control of factories, redistributed food, and organized local security. They were the natural product of revolutionary enthusiasm and class awakening among the masses. For a brief moment, these committees represented the first glimpse of the soviet idea on Korean soil.

However, this spontaneous self-organization of the people was not allowed to mature. Under the supervision of Soviet military command and the emerging North Korean leadership, the independent committees were rapidly subordinated to central authority. Instead of developing into organs of direct workers' power—soviets in the Leninist sense—they were re-labeled as administrative branches of the new state and emptied of their revolutionary content. Officials appointed from above replaced delegates elected from below. The voice of the factory and the village was replaced by orders from Pyongyang. The transformation of these committees marked the end of the short-lived people's initiative and the birth of a bureaucratic order.

Lenin had taught that the essence of the proletarian revolution lies not merely in the seizure of state power, but in the creation of new forms of power by the workers themselves. In *State and Revolution*, he wrote that the working class must "smash the old state machine" and replace it with its own organs of rule, where every worker can take part in administration and where officials are accountable and recallable. This principle defined the soviets in Russia—living assemblies of workers and peasants that embodied the direct rule of the majority. Through them, the people were not governed, they governed themselves.

The Korean revolution, however, took a path opposite to Lenin's conception. Instead of the state beginning to disappear through workers' self-administration, it was strengthened and

raised above society. The soviets, which should have been the instrument for the people's liberation, were replaced by a network of party and police control. The workers were not trained to govern; they were trained to obey. Production was directed not by collective decision of producers, but by state plans drawn up by bureaucrats. The peasants received land not as free cultivators within a cooperative system they themselves managed, but as temporary holders bound to state quotas and surveillance.

This was not the dictatorship of the proletariat in Lenin's sense. It was the dictatorship over the proletariat by a new bureaucratic stratum. Lenin's insistence that "the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the workers themselves" was abandoned. The Korean Workers' Party proclaimed itself the guardian of the people, yet it did not permit the people to speak or act independently. Thus the revolutionary energy that could have created a true people's power was smothered beneath administrative forms.

The absence of genuine proletarian self-organization meant that the foundation of North Korea's new state was alien to Marxist and Leninist thought. Where Lenin had demanded broad participation, criticism, and the replacement of hierarchy with equality, North Korea built a structure of command. The organs of the revolution became tools of control. The worker who should have been a participant in history became once again a subject under authority.

This early substitution of bureaucracy for soviets determined all that followed. Without the living organs of workers and peasants, the revolution lost its soul. It could only reproduce new forms of domination under socialist symbols. The red flag fluttered over factories and fields, but beneath it stood the same relation between rulers and ruled. The Marxist concept of class power turned into its opposite: a state claiming to speak for the workers while silencing their voice.

As the northern half of Korea took form after 1945, the figure of Kim Il Sung was elevated to the center of all political and ideological life. His early leadership, backed by Soviet authority, soon transformed from temporary wartime prominence into permanent domination. The state that emerged under his direction did not embody the collective leadership that Lenin saw as essential for a communist party. Instead, it gave rise to the personal cult of the leader, a phenomenon foreign to Marx and Lenin and rooted in the Stalinistic deformation of socialism.

Kim Il Sung, though originally one among several anti-Japanese guerrilla commanders, was promoted as the sole symbol of liberation by the Soviet administration. Propaganda glorified him as the "great leader" who had single-handedly freed the Korean nation. His biography was rewritten to erase the collective role of workers and partisans. Other revolutionary figures—those who had fought in China, in domestic underground cells, or in exile—were marginalized or eliminated. Within a few years, the new state replaced the idea of the working class as the subject of history with the idea of the leader as the creator of history. This was the first decisive break with Marxist thought, for Marxism teaches that history is made by the masses, not by individuals.

Lenin's writings had clearly warned against such degeneration. In *What Is To Be Done?*, he described the party as the vanguard of the working class, a disciplined organization bound by ideological unity and collective responsibility. Leadership, according to Lenin, must emerge from the most conscious workers, not from the authority of one man. Later, in his polemics after the revolution, Lenin repeatedly insisted that within the party there must be broad inner democracy—freedom of discussion, criticism, and control by the rank and file. He wrote that "without democracy there can be no proletarian centralism," emphasizing that unity of action could not exist without the participation and supervision of the masses.

Kim Il Sung's leadership developed in direct opposition to these Leninist principles. From the very beginning, the Korean Workers' Party was built on obedience rather than on criticism. Party congresses became ceremonial gatherings instead of living debates. Positions within the party were filled not through election by the membership but by appointment from above. Those who expressed disagreement were denounced as "factionalists" and purged. The first major purges of the late 1940s and early 1950s—against the "domestic," "Yan'an," and "Soviet Korean" factions—destroyed all forms of internal balance and left Kim as the only unquestioned authority.

The cult of personality that followed was not an accident but a necessary product of this structure. The press, education, and art were mobilized to glorify the leader's genius and virtue. His image filled every school, every office, and every home. The word of Kim Il Sung replaced the collective resolutions of party congresses. The revolutionary slogans of Marx and Lenin were reinterpreted through his personal sayings. In this transformation, the party ceased to be the organized consciousness of the working class and became the transmission belt for one individual's will.

Lenin had written that after the seizure of power, the most dangerous enemy of the revolution was the growth of bureaucracy and the isolation of leaders from the masses. He urged that every worker participate in administration and that officials be paid the same as the average worker. In the North Korean system, the opposite occurred. Officials lived in privilege, their authority unquestioned. Kim's family and closest followers enjoyed special housing, food, and protection. The distance between rulers and ruled widened. The leader was portrayed as a fatherly savior rather than as a servant of the working class.

This structure destroyed the very core of Lenin's party discipline. For Lenin, discipline meant the conscious unity of the workers guided by shared revolutionary thought. In North Korea, discipline meant blind obedience to orders from above. Instead of the dialectical exchange of ideas within the party, there was only the echo of the leader's voice. The capacity of the workers to think and decide collectively—what Lenin called "conscious activity"—was replaced by ritual praise and repetition of official formulas.

Thus the early leadership of Kim Il Sung, though clothed in revolutionary language, represented the birth of a new form of despotism. The collective leadership envisioned by Lenin was displaced by personal rule. The revolutionary party, meant to be the instrument of the working class, became the instrument of one man. In this substitution lay the seed of all

later deformities—the hereditary succession, the silencing of workers, the dominance of bureaucracy, and the transformation of socialism into a static doctrine of loyalty.

The early years of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea therefore revealed the central contradiction of its so-called revolution: a movement that spoke in the name of Marx and Lenin but acted according to the pattern of Stalinism. Where Lenin sought the awakening of millions of workers to conscious participation, Kim Il Sung demanded the devotion of millions to one leader. What should have been the victory of the proletariat became the victory of hierarchy.

From its very formation, the North Korean state carried within it the marks of a Stalinistic order. Its birth did not come from the collective will of the Korean working class but from the administrative and military designs of external powers and a small cadre of bureaucrats who adopted the forms of communism while abandoning its essence. The people's committees that could have grown into true organs of workers' and peasants' power were stripped of their independence and turned into instruments of state control. The new army, police, and party were organized not as vehicles of the people's self-defense, but as instruments of obedience to authority.

The structure that arose was hierarchical in every sense. The state stood above the people, the party stood above the workers, and within the party stood the leader as an untouchable figure. Authority moved from the top downward, never from the bottom upward. Every factory, farm, and commune became part of a rigid command system in which initiative and criticism were treated as disloyalty. The worker, who in Lenin's thought was to become a conscious administrator of production and society, became instead a disciplined executor of orders. This was the transformation of socialism from a movement of liberation into a mechanism of control.

The military character of the new regime further reinforced this Stalinistic pattern. The glorification of armed struggle and the constant invocation of external threats served to justify the militarization of all social life. The army was not simply a force for defense but a pillar of internal order, ensuring obedience and suppressing dissent. Lenin had argued that a workers' state must dissolve the standing army and replace it with the armed people. North Korea did the opposite: it built one of the most centralized and privileged military institutions in the world, separated from the masses it claimed to protect.

Centralization became the defining principle of governance. Every decision flowed from the party center in Pyongyang, and every organization, from village cooperative to industrial combine, was bound by absolute subordination to that center. This bureaucratic centralism bore no resemblance to Lenin's democratic centralism, in which unity of action was based on freedom of discussion and voluntary discipline. The North Korean model eliminated discussion and turned unity into enforced conformity. What Lenin described as the living movement of a revolutionary party became in Korea a frozen hierarchy of command.

Ideologically, the regime replaced Marxism-Leninism as a scientific method of analysis with a dogma of loyalty to the leader. The thought of Marx, Engels, and Lenin—based on

dialectics, material analysis, and the self-emancipation of the working class—was reduced to slogans and ceremonial quotations. The ability of the people to engage in independent socialist thought disappeared under a fog of personality worship and ritualized political study. The party became not the vanguard of the working class but a body of officials tasked with transmitting the will of one man to millions.

By the end of the 1940s, when the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was officially proclaimed, the Stalinistic framework was complete. The means of production were nationalized, but not socialized; the state belonged not to the workers but to the bureaucracy. The political system was called "people's democracy," but it allowed no genuine participation. The working class was told it had achieved power, yet its role was confined to labor and obedience. The state apparatus, far from beginning to disappear as Lenin foresaw, became more massive and intrusive with each passing year.

The supposed revolution in Korea therefore never followed the Marxist-Leninist path of class emancipation. It was a revolution without the soviets, without proletarian democracy, and without the rule of the working people themselves. It was a transformation of rulers, not of social relations. The Japanese colonial bureaucracy was replaced by a native bureaucracy dressed in revolutionary symbols. The chains were painted red, but they remained chains.

Thus, from its foundation, North Korea's state stood as a mirror of the Stalinistic system: hierarchical, military, and centralized. It claimed to continue Lenin's work but denied his deepest teachings. The true revolution—the one that places the worker at the center of power and opens the way for the disappearance of the state—was never allowed to begin. Instead, the Korean people entered a new stage of subjugation, now carried out in the name of socialism.

The tragedy of Korea lies not in its failure to achieve independence, for independence was formally achieved, but in the form that independence took: the reproduction of despotism within a socialist frame. The task of Marxist analysis is therefore to uncover this contradiction, to separate the living thought of Marx, Engels, and Lenin from the dead mechanism of Stalinism, and to show that the liberation of Korea, and of all peoples, can come only from the conscious self-activity of the workers themselves.

## Stalinistic Foundations of the North Korean State

To understand the character of the North Korean state, one must first define scientifically what Stalinism is—not as a mere historical label or insult, but as a distinct social and political system that arose within the post-revolutionary period of the Soviet Union and later reproduced itself in various countries, including North Korea. Stalinism represents not a continuation of Marx, Engels, and Lenin's thought, but a distortion and reversal of it. It is the form taken by a bureaucratic counter-revolution within the framework of socialism, a system where the means of production are formally nationalized, yet the working class is deprived of power and replaced by a bureaucratic elite.

In Lenin's conception, the proletarian revolution was to destroy the old state apparatus and replace it with organs of workers' self-government—the soviets. These soviets were to express the living will of the working people and serve as the foundation of the socialist state, which would begin to disappear as class antagonisms vanished. Stalinism arose precisely as the negation of this process. Instead of the state beginning to disappear, it was strengthened beyond anything known under capitalism. The bureaucracy, originally a technical instrument of the workers' state, transformed into a self-serving ruling stratum. It monopolized administration, silenced criticism, and ruled over the working class in the name of socialism.

The first and essential mark of Stalinism is the *concentration of power in a bureaucratic elite*. This elite is not defined by private property but by control over distribution, appointment, and decision-making. It occupies the commanding heights of the state, party, and economy, and treats these as its personal domain. It reproduces privilege through administrative mechanisms rather than ownership, yet the result is the same: exploitation of the many by the few. In Stalinistic systems, the worker does not command the state; the state commands the worker. The slogan "All power to the soviets" is replaced by "All power to the party," and the party itself becomes the private apparatus of the ruling bureaucracy.

The second defining feature is the *suppression of workers' soviets and popular participation*. The soviets, which were the heart of Lenin's socialist democracy, are emptied of content. They exist in name, but their delegates are appointed rather than elected, and their meetings serve to confirm decisions already made by higher authorities. Workers and peasants cease to be active participants in governance and become passive subjects. This suppression of independent organization is justified as "discipline," "unity," or "protection of the revolution," but in reality it is the destruction of the revolution's very soul.

The third and most fatal feature is the *destruction of party democracy*. In the Leninist conception, the party of the new type was to be an organization of the most conscious workers, united by common purpose yet governed by open discussion, criticism, and the right of the membership to elect and recall its leadership. Stalinism abolished this inner life of the party. It transformed the vanguard of the proletariat into a bureaucratic machine. Party congresses became ritual ceremonies; criticism was denounced as treachery; and political differences were resolved not through debate but through purges and terror. The party, instead of educating the working class, became an organ for suppressing it.

The Stalinistic system thus stands as a new form of class domination. Its material foundation is the separation between those who command and those who work. It maintains this separation through centralized control, ideological manipulation, and the cult of the leader. While it continues to speak in Marxist language, it empties that language of revolutionary content. The state proclaims itself socialist but preserves all the essential features of oppression: hierarchy, privilege, and obedience.

When viewed through this scientific definition, it becomes evident that North Korea's political structure, from its birth, embodied every hallmark of Stalinism. The bureaucratic elite in Pyongyang replaced the Japanese colonial rulers, the workers' soviets were never allowed to exist as real organs of power, and the party became a closed hierarchy loyal not to

the working class but to the supreme leader. The very features that Lenin fought against in his last years—the growth of bureaucracy, the cult of infallible leadership, and the silencing of proletarian initiative—were institutionalized as virtues in the North Korean system.

Stalinism is therefore not a stage of socialism but its negation. It preserves the external forms of socialist organization while reversing its inner content. It transforms the revolution into a static order, the workers' state into a state over the workers, and the party of liberation into an instrument of domination. North Korea's history can be understood only within this scientific framework: as the transplantation of Stalinistic power relations onto Korean soil, where they took on a national and hereditary form but retained their essential class content—the rule of a bureaucracy over the working people.

The construction of the North Korean state after 1945 followed almost precisely the pattern established by Stalin in the Soviet Union. This was not accidental imitation but a deliberate transplantation of the Stalinistic system onto Korean soil. The Soviet occupation authorities introduced the same administrative and political framework that had existed in Moscow: a centralized party structure under a single leader, a police apparatus to maintain ideological control, and a network of propaganda institutions to mold public thought. The Korean Workers' Party was organized according to this model, with absolute subordination of all members to the Central Committee and of the Central Committee to the supreme leader.

From the beginning, the figure of Kim Il Sung was built in the image of Stalin. Like Stalin, Kim was presented as the "father" and "teacher" of the people, the source of all wisdom and decision. His personal authority stood above the party, the government, and the people themselves. No institution could act independently of his will. In formal structure, the state had ministries, committees, and a parliament; in practice, all decisions emanated from one office. The single leader became the living embodiment of the state, the party, and the revolution. In this system, the collective body—the working class, the soviets, the party membership—ceased to have real historical agency.

Stalin's model of governance rested upon absolute control over the party. He had transformed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from an organization of conscious revolutionaries into an obedient hierarchy of officials. Party democracy was abolished through purges, denunciations, and the creation of an atmosphere of fear. Kim Il Sung adopted the same methods. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Korean Workers' Party underwent a series of purges that removed all independent currents of thought. The "Soviet Koreans," the "Yan'an group," and the "domestic communists" were successively accused of disloyalty and eliminated. These purges, modeled on Stalin's own campaigns against alleged "enemies of the people," secured Kim's personal supremacy and destroyed all possibility of internal criticism.

The party, once proclaimed as the vanguard of the working class, was transformed into the administrative organ of one man. Every party cell became a channel for transmitting the leader's directives. Every congress and meeting served to praise him and repeat his words. The revolutionary slogan "Serve the people" was replaced by "Follow the leader." Under these conditions, no theoretical development, no genuine Marxist debate, could take place.

Thought was replaced by repetition. The leader's statements were treated as final truth, not as contributions to collective analysis.

The ideological mechanism that sustained this system was the formation of a cult—a structure of belief and ritual that turned the leader into an object of veneration. This cult served the same function as religion had under feudalism: it sanctified authority and rendered the masses submissive. The cult of the leader replaced class consciousness with personal devotion. Instead of identifying themselves as part of the international working class, Koreans were taught to identify themselves as "children of the Great Leader." The class struggle was reinterpreted as loyalty to his will.

The means of cult formation were systematic. Education was reorganized to center around the life and sayings of Kim Il Sung. History was rewritten to portray him as the sole architect of liberation, erasing the collective struggle of workers, peasants, and anti-Japanese partisans. The press and art were made into instruments of glorification. Songs, films, and literature depicted him not as a political leader subject to criticism, but as an infallible genius. Every success was attributed to his wisdom; every failure was blamed on his subordinates. Portraits of Kim filled every school, office, and home. To speak his name became a ritual of loyalty; to question it became treason.

This worship was not simply a matter of personality; it was a political mechanism essential to the maintenance of bureaucratic rule. The cult provided the ideological cement that held the hierarchy together. In place of Marxist analysis, which explains social development through material and class conditions, the cult offered a narrative of miracles achieved by the leader's virtue. It turned socialism from a science of emancipation into a mythology of obedience. The workers were no longer the conscious builders of history but passive recipients of the leader's benevolence.

Under Stalin, the same process had occurred: Marxism was transformed from a method of critical analysis into a doctrine of authority. The same occurred in Korea, only in an even more rigid and hereditary form. By reducing socialism to the words of a single man, the regime extinguished the dialectical movement of thought that Marx, Engels, and Lenin had developed. What had once been a revolutionary theory became a catechism.

Thus, the North Korean state did not merely copy Stalin's administrative model; it replicated his ideological foundation. The cult of the leader replaced the collective consciousness of the working class. Obedience replaced participation. Faith replaced understanding. This was not an accident of history but the necessary outcome of the Stalinistic structure—a system that cannot exist without the sanctification of authority, for without such sanctification, its contradictions would be exposed and its rule would collapse.

The North Korean people were therefore not united as a class acting for their own liberation, but as followers united in reverence. The red banner that once symbolized the workers' struggle became the banner of one man's glory. In this transformation lay the deepest betrayal of Marxism: the substitution of devotion for consciousness, of hierarchy for equality, and of myth for truth.

Lenin conceived the proletarian state not as an eternal institution, but as a temporary and transitional form — a necessary bridge between the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a stateless, classless society. In *State and Revolution*, he explained that the working class must use the state as a tool to suppress the resistance of the exploiters and to reorganize production under collective ownership. Yet, this state, unlike the bourgeois state, would not stand above society as a power separate from the people. It would be an instrument of the majority, subject to their direct control and destined to *disappear* as social antagonisms were abolished. The revolution's goal was therefore not the creation of a new state power, but the abolition of the conditions that made any state necessary.

Lenin wrote that the first act of the proletariat, upon taking power, was to begin the process of dismantling the old machinery of domination. The workers' state would replace professional armies with the armed people, career bureaucracy with elected and recallable officials, and privilege with equality of wages between administrators and workers. These measures were not decorative reforms; they were the essence of socialist democracy — the transformation of governance into collective administration by the working masses themselves. The vitality of the revolution depended on this constant movement toward simplification, decentralization, and the reduction of authority. The more the people governed themselves, the less need there was for a state above them.

North Korea's state structure, from its inception, moved in the exact opposite direction. It was designed not to disappear, but to solidify. The organs of administration, army, and police were expanded and fortified. Far from being temporary, they became the permanent framework of society. Every sphere of life — work, education, housing, even family relations — was brought under state supervision. The state did not prepare the people to govern themselves; it trained them to obey. The apparatus of coercion grew not weaker, but stronger, binding the entire nation into a military-administrative hierarchy.

The militarization of society became one of the defining features of this state. The working class, which should have been the leading force in social transformation, was subordinated to military discipline. Factories operated under systems of command identical to those of the army. The glorification of the armed struggle against Japan was turned into a permanent ideology of vigilance and mobilization. The people were told they lived under constant threat from external enemies, a claim used to justify the maintenance of an immense army and the subordination of civil life to military necessity. In Lenin's view, the workers' state was to *replace* the standing army with the armed people. In North Korea, the armed people were replaced by a standing army, whose loyalty was directed not to the working class but to the supreme leader.

As time passed, the state's permanence became not only political and military, but hereditary. Kim Il Sung's personal authority evolved into a dynastic institution, passed to his son Kim Jong Il and later to his grandson Kim Jong Un. The so-called "Democratic People's Republic" thus became a hereditary monarchy — a phenomenon utterly alien to Marxism and Leninism. Lenin had warned that unless bureaucracy was fought relentlessly, it would transform the proletarian state into a new form of oppression. In North Korea, this warning

became reality in its most complete form: the bureaucratic state transformed itself into a self-reproducing dynasty, where power was transmitted by bloodline, not by class consciousness.

This hereditary system violated the most basic Marxist understanding of history. In Marx's thought, social progress results from the struggle of classes and the development of productive forces, not from the will or virtue of individuals. Yet in North Korea, history was rewritten as the story of a single family's wisdom and benevolence. The leader became the axis of all political, economic, and spiritual life. The state, instead of fading away, became sanctified as eternal. Even death could not remove the leader's authority; Kim Il Sung was proclaimed "Eternal President" after his passing, a sign that the apparatus of rule had become permanent, self-justifying, and beyond change.

In this structure, one sees the complete reversal of Lenin's vision. The proletarian state, meant to be a tool of transition toward the disappearance of coercive power, was transformed in North Korea into a permanent mechanism of control. The officials who should have been temporary administrators of a passing phase became a privileged class. The army, meant to dissolve into the people, became the pillar of an unending hierarchy. The leader, who in Leninist terms should have been the first servant of the revolution, became its substitute and its idol.

Thus, the North Korean state embodies the exact opposite of the Marxist-Leninist concept of socialist transition. Instead of the withering away of the state, there arose its monumentalization. Instead of self-government by the working people, there came obedience to command. Instead of equality, hierarchy. The revolution, which in Lenin's thought was to set humanity on the path to freedom, in Korea froze into a permanent system of submission.

The Stalinistic roots of this development are clear. Stalin had already turned the Soviet state from an organ of workers' rule into an apparatus of bureaucratic domination, justified by endless appeals to "defense of socialism." North Korea extended this logic to its extreme: a state eternalized by fear, sanctified by hereditary rule, and militarized against its own people. It is the negation of Lenin's dream — a system that uses the symbols of communism to conceal the survival of class power in new form.

In *State and Revolution*, Lenin explained that the triumph of the proletariat would not end the class struggle immediately but transform its form. The old exploiting classes would be overthrown, yet the remnants of bourgeois habits, administrative privilege, and inequality would persist. Therefore, Lenin insisted that the new workers' state must not imitate the bureaucratic machinery of the bourgeoisie, but destroy it and replace it with a simpler system in which the workers themselves directly administer social affairs. "Every cook must learn to govern," he wrote, meaning that the administration of society should be brought down to the level of ordinary working people and not reserved for a privileged minority.

Lenin's central warning was that bureaucracy is not merely an organizational defect; it is the seed of a new class. When officials are separated from the workers, when they command rather than serve, when they enjoy privileges of income and status, they cease to be part of the proletariat and become a new stratum of exploiters. In *State and Revolution*, he proposed

concrete measures to prevent this degeneration: all officials to be elected and recallable, no official to receive a salary higher than that of an average worker, and all administrative functions to be constantly rotated among the people. These principles were designed not for moral symbolism but for material protection of the revolution — to prevent the re-emergence of class domination in socialist form.

The bureaucratic order that took hold in North Korea was the direct violation of every one of Lenin's safeguards. The state apparatus, instead of being dismantled and simplified, was expanded into a massive pyramid of ministries, departments, and committees. At its apex stood the party elite, whose privileges in housing, food, and education set them apart from the masses. The result was a social division not unlike the one Marx described under capitalism: a minority directing and consuming, a majority producing and obeying. The official ideology declared that classes had been abolished, but in reality a new class had emerged — the bureaucratic caste.

This caste was defined not by ownership of private property but by its command over state property. In the name of collective ownership, the bureaucracy monopolized control over production, distribution, and social life. Workers and peasants did not decide what to produce, how to distribute it, or how to use the surplus; these decisions were made by party administrators, factory directors, and planning officials. The bureaucracy thus appropriated the social surplus in political rather than economic form. It enjoyed better rations, access to special shops, and privileges unknown to the ordinary worker. Lenin foresaw precisely this danger when he wrote that the "worst enemy" of the revolution would be the survival of the old bureaucratic habits inside the new state.

In Lenin's view, bureaucratization was not a technical problem but a social contradiction — the reappearance of alienation within socialism. The worker, instead of being the master of production, once again confronts his own labor as a force outside his control, administered by others. The bureaucracy, like the capitalist, becomes the personification of this alien power. The essence of communism — the conscious, collective control of social life by free workers — is thus betrayed. In Lenin's words, the goal of the proletarian revolution was to "smash the old state machine" so that no power could rise above the people. But in North Korea, the old machine was not smashed; it was re-painted. The colonial bureaucracy was replaced by a new national bureaucracy, the capitalist managers by party secretaries, yet the relation between rulers and ruled remained intact.

The form of the state changed, but the social content — command, obedience, and privilege — persisted. Bureaucracy became the new mode of class domination. In place of capitalist competition, there was administrative hierarchy; in place of market exploitation, there was political compulsion. The bureaucracy's authority was justified through ideology, not profit, but its essence was the same: the appropriation of social power by a minority. Lenin warned that if this tendency were not fought through workers' control and constant renewal of the soviet system, it would turn the workers' state into its opposite. North Korea is the living demonstration of that warning fulfilled.

The Korean bureaucratic elite, having eliminated all organs of proletarian participation, entrenched itself as a permanent social group. Its reproduction was secured by privileges passed to family members, by control of education, and by political loyalty to the leader. In this way, the bureaucratic order even took on hereditary features, reproducing class inequality in bloodline form. Thus, what Marx and Lenin called the state of transition toward communism became in North Korea a frozen structure — a new hierarchy disguised as socialism.

Bureaucratization therefore betrayed communism not only in practice but in principle. It replaced the living self-activity of the masses with administrative decree, turned the working class from subject into object, and preserved the division between rulers and ruled. Lenin's *State and Revolution* was a guide to the destruction of such divisions; North Korea turned it into a doctrine to justify them. The result is a society where the words of Marx and Lenin are recited daily, but their essence — the collective power of the workers — has been entirely suppressed beneath the weight of bureaucracy.

From the analysis of its origins and structure, it becomes clear that the foundation of North Korea was Stalinistic, not Marxist. What arose in the northern half of the Korean peninsula after 1945 was not a workers' state in the Leninist sense, but a bureaucratic apparatus modeled after the Stalinistic system of the Soviet Union — a system where the state ceased to be a transitional tool of the proletariat and became an end in itself.

Marx and Lenin understood the state as a temporary form born from class struggle, destined to disappear once exploitation and class antagonisms were abolished. The working class was to seize the state only to dismantle it from within, to make it simpler, more transparent, and subordinate to the masses. The state, as Lenin taught, was to begin its own disappearance the moment the workers took power. The soviets of workers and peasants were to replace the old bureaucratic organs, allowing the producers to administer their own life directly.

In North Korea, this Marxist-Leninist vision was completely inverted. The state did not begin to disappear — it grew, consolidated, and hardened into an autonomous force towering over the people. It became the guardian of its own permanence, not the tool of emancipation. The slogan "the people are masters of society" became hollow when every aspect of life was regulated from above. The police, the army, the party, and the bureaucracy were fused into a single mechanism of control. In place of the workers' self-government, there was surveillance; in place of equality, privilege; in place of participation, obedience.

The Stalinistic state turned itself into an idol. It proclaimed that it existed for the people, yet it demanded worship from them. It declared itself the embodiment of socialism, yet it stood above the working class as a new exploiting power. Its leaders justified every excess — repression, censorship, militarization — in the name of "defending the revolution," while the real revolution, the rule of the workers themselves, was never allowed to begin.

By transforming the state into the supreme value, North Korea betrayed the fundamental idea of Marxism: that liberation must come from the conscious activity of the working people, not from decrees of officials. The bureaucracy, once justified as a temporary necessity, became a

permanent ruling class. Its privilege, authority, and very existence depended on the continuation of state domination. The result was a self-reproducing hierarchy in which the state no longer served the workers — the workers served the state.

The cult of the leader gave this hierarchy its ideological form. By presenting the state as the personal creation of Kim Il Sung and his successors, the bureaucracy cloaked its class power in the language of loyalty and devotion. Thus the revolutionary consciousness of the people was replaced by faith in authority. The worker who was to become the creator of history became its spectator.

North Korea's foundation, therefore, was not Marxist because it denied the essence of Marxism — the active role of the working class and the movement toward the disappearance of the state. It was not Leninist because it destroyed the soviets, abolished party democracy, and turned centralism into absolute command. It was Stalinistic because it preserved all the outward symbols of socialism while reproducing the social content of oppression.

The North Korean state stands as a monument to this contradiction. It proclaims the end of class rule but perpetuates a new ruling class; it speaks of equality while enforcing hierarchy; it claims to represent the workers while keeping them voiceless. It is a state without transition, a revolution without emancipation. In it, the living movement of Marx and Lenin's communism was frozen into an administrative system where the state became its own purpose — a machine existing not to serve humanity, but to preserve itself.

Thus, the foundation of North Korea reveals the full meaning of the Stalinistic deviation: socialism transformed from a process of liberation into an apparatus of domination. The state, instead of disappearing in the hands of free workers, became a permanent institution of power, its own justification, and its own goal. It is against this historical distortion that true Marxism must once again raise its banner — the banner of the workers' rule, collective administration, and the ultimate disappearance of the state as an instrument of domination.

## Party Dictatorship and Bureaucratic Rule

In Lenin's understanding, the revolutionary party is not a substitute for the working class but its conscious vanguard — the organized expression of its most advanced elements. The party's purpose is to educate, unite, and lead the working people toward their own self-liberation. It is the organizer of class consciousness, not the instrument of command over the masses. In *What Is To Be Done?* and later in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Lenin explained that the party must combine two qualities: the highest discipline in action and the broadest democracy in thought. The unity of will he demanded was not obedience to leaders, but the voluntary coordination of the most conscious workers based on shared understanding and discussion.

Lenin's vision of the party was inseparable from his idea of proletarian democracy. He saw the revolutionary party as both guide and servant of the class, a tool for its education and self-

organization. After the seizure of power, the party was to remain under the control of the working class, continually renewed by criticism from below. Lenin emphasized that the party must not become a separate institution with interests of its own, for once the vanguard detaches itself from the masses, it ceases to be revolutionary and becomes bureaucratic. The health of the revolution depends on the living link between the party and the workers — a constant exchange of experience, criticism, and initiative.

This principle was destroyed under Stalinism, and it was never realized in North Korea. The Korean Workers' Party, formed under the direct supervision of Soviet officials after 1945, inherited not Lenin's model of a vanguard of conscious workers, but Stalin's model of a ruling apparatus. From the very beginning, it functioned as the administrative extension of the state rather than as the educator and organizer of the proletariat. Its leadership was not elected through the struggle of ideas among the workers but appointed and confirmed through loyalty to Kim Il Sung and the Soviet military authorities. The party's mission was defined not as serving the working class but as commanding it.

In theory, the Korean Workers' Party presented itself as the leading force of the revolution, acting on behalf of the proletariat. In reality, it became a body of privilege — an elite standing above the very class it claimed to represent. The privileges of party membership were material as well as political: access to better housing, education, and food, and immunity from the hardships that burdened the working population. Party officials became a distinct social group whose interests no longer coincided with those of the workers. Their survival depended on maintaining the existing hierarchy and the cult of the leader, not on advancing the consciousness and participation of the masses.

The transformation of the party from vanguard to ruler signified the complete reversal of Lenin's teaching. Where Lenin saw the party as an instrument for the disappearance of the state, North Korea turned it into the foundation of an eternal state apparatus. Where Lenin demanded that party leaders be subject to criticism and recall, North Korea sanctified them as infallible. The concept of *democratic centralism*, which for Lenin meant freedom of discussion combined with unity in action, was reduced to mere centralism — the enforcement of obedience without discussion. The living spirit of the revolution, the open exchange of ideas among the workers, was replaced by ritual meetings where members repeated official slogans and pledged loyalty to their superiors.

This bureaucratic structure transformed the party into a social hierarchy rather than a collective of equals. Its officials were not accountable to the working class but to the supreme leader and the organs of internal security. As a result, the party ceased to be a school of socialism and became a mechanism for transmitting orders. The cadres learned not how to lead workers toward self-government, but how to maintain discipline and conformity. The revolutionary function of the party — to awaken the creative power of the masses — was replaced by the administrative function of control.

In Lenin's time, the party was to be the conscious expression of the proletariat's historical mission: to abolish class domination. In North Korea, the party became the new form of class domination itself. The very instrument meant to liberate the workers turned into the means of

their subordination. The Korean Workers' Party, clothed in the name of communism, became a bureaucracy defending its own existence, its privileges, and its absolute loyalty to the leader. The contradiction was total: a party that spoke the language of Marx and Lenin, yet acted in the tradition of the very oppression Marxism sought to destroy.

Thus, the foundation of North Korea's political system reveals one of the deepest distortions of the Stalinistic model: the replacement of the workers' vanguard with a bureaucratic caste. The party, instead of serving as the conscious organ of the proletariat, became its overseer. The banner of socialism was raised high, but beneath it stood not the self-governing workers that Lenin envisioned, but a hierarchy of officials whose power depended on keeping the workers silent.

The consolidation of the North Korean regime was achieved not through persuasion and participation, but through fear and repression. What began under Soviet supervision as a centralized party structure soon developed into a complete system of political control, in which purges, surveillance, and enforced loyalty became permanent features of social life. These mechanisms of repression did not merely protect the ruling elite from external enemies; they reshaped the very nature of society, eliminating all forms of proletarian democracy and replacing them with total obedience.

In the first years after the establishment of the Korean Workers' Party, purges were carried out against those who represented even the slightest deviation from the official line. The "Soviet Koreans," those who had returned from the Soviet Union, the "Yan'an group," who had fought in China, and the "domestic communists," who had led resistance within Korea itself, were each in turn accused of factionalism, revisionism, or treachery. These purges, conducted in imitation of Stalin's terror of the 1930s, destroyed every potential center of independent thought or criticism within the party. Those who had once been comrades in the struggle against Japanese imperialism were denounced, imprisoned, or executed. In this process, the party lost the internal democracy Lenin had demanded and became a monolithic structure revolving around the will of one man.

The elimination of internal opposition was not limited to the higher ranks. The entire society was drawn into the web of surveillance and control. The party, the army, and the secret police worked together to create a system in which every individual was monitored. Neighborhood watch units, workplace committees, and family groups were organized to report any sign of "disloyalty." This network of informers penetrated every aspect of daily life, ensuring that no independent gathering, discussion, or organization could arise. The worker who in Lenin's conception was to be the master of the state became instead an object of state suspicion.

The forced loyalty oath was another central mechanism of control. Every citizen, from childhood, was required to swear absolute devotion to Kim Il Sung and the party. These oaths were repeated in schools, workplaces, and public ceremonies. They were not expressions of conviction but acts of compulsion — public affirmations that bound each person's survival to their obedience. The psychological effect was profound: fear and conformity replaced solidarity and collective initiative. Where Lenin had insisted that the new society must

awaken the people's consciousness, North Korea dulled it with ritual. The revolutionary spirit was replaced by mechanical repetition.

This system of repression destroyed what Marx and Lenin called the essence of proletarian democracy: the active participation of the working people in governing their own affairs. Under Marxism, democracy is not simply the right to vote or speak, but the full engagement of the workers in administration, production, and social life. It means criticism, discussion, and the correction of errors through the participation of the masses. Lenin described criticism as the lifeblood of the workers' state. In North Korea, criticism became a crime. The people were forbidden to think independently, for all truth was said to come from the leader.

By removing criticism, the ruling bureaucracy eliminated its only means of correction. Mistakes could no longer be exposed or rectified, because doing so would imply doubt in the infallibility of the leadership. The result was stagnation and fear. Production targets were falsified, reports fabricated, and failures hidden, all to maintain the illusion of perfection demanded by the regime. The state, instead of being the tool of the working class, became an organism that fed upon deception to sustain its authority.

The destruction of proletarian democracy also meant the destruction of class consciousness. The worker no longer saw himself as part of a collective class struggling for liberation, but as an individual subject to the leader's benevolence. Loyalty replaced solidarity. The people were mobilized not to govern but to praise; not to shape policy but to perform obedience. Marx's idea that "the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the workers themselves" was inverted: emancipation was declared to have already been granted by the leader, and any further demand for freedom was treated as ingratitude or treason.

Thus, through purges, surveillance, and forced loyalty, the North Korean system annihilated the Marxist concept of democracy from below. The soviets of workers and peasants were replaced by administrative organs of command. The party became a mechanism of control, and the working class was reduced to a mass of disciplined subjects. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which in Lenin's thought was to be the conscious rule of the majority over the exploiters, became in practice the dictatorship of a bureaucracy over the proletariat itself.

These instruments of repression were not temporary measures but permanent features of the Stalinistic order. They ensured stability for the bureaucracy but strangled the creative life of the revolution. The energy of the working people, which should have been directed toward building socialism, was consumed by fear and submission. In this way, the North Korean system preserved the outward symbols of Marxism while extinguishing its inner content — collective rule, freedom of criticism, and the awakening of human consciousness.

Decision-making in North Korea follows the same rigid vertical pattern that characterized Stalin's command system in the Soviet Union. Power is concentrated entirely at the top, in the hands of the leader and a narrow circle of trusted officials. Orders flow downward in an unbroken chain of command, from the supreme leader through the Central Committee, the provincial party apparatus, and finally to the smallest workplace or village unit. Nowhere in this structure is there genuine discussion, election, or control from below. The masses are not

the source of policy but the recipients of directives. This form of governance, though wrapped in the language of socialism, is the direct negation of Lenin's concept of collective leadership and proletarian democracy.

Lenin's *party of the new type* was built upon the idea of collective decision-making rooted in the participation of the most conscious workers. In his writings on democratic centralism, Lenin insisted that "freedom of discussion and unity of action" were inseparable. Centralism, in his thought, meant coordination of revolutionary activity, not the elimination of debate. Every member of the party had the right and the duty to participate in discussion, to criticize errors, and to help shape decisions. Only after free debate would unity in action be achieved. It was through this process that the party could remain the living vanguard of the working class, continually correcting itself through collective thought.

In North Korea, however, democratic centralism was transformed into pure centralism. Freedom of discussion was abolished, while unity of action became compulsory obedience. The "democratic" aspect disappeared entirely, leaving only command. This shift did not occur by accident; it was built into the very structure of the state and party. The Central Committee did not function as a collective leadership but as an organ to transmit the will of Kim Il Sung. Decisions were made by the leader personally or by his closest aides, and the rest of the party merely implemented them. Party congresses, which should have served as the highest authority of the organization, became ceremonial events where pre-determined resolutions were unanimously approved without debate.

At every level, the same pattern prevailed. Provincial and local party meetings began not with discussion but with the reading of directives from above. Members were required to pledge loyalty, not to contribute ideas. Reports were written to praise higher authorities rather than to analyze the real conditions of work or production. In factories, schools, and cooperatives, political guidance was enforced through party secretaries whose task was not to represent the workers' interests but to ensure ideological conformity. Thus, the structure that claimed to embody the leadership of the working class in fact silenced it completely.

This top-down organization reproduced the essence of Stalin's command system. In the Soviet Union under Stalin, planning and administration had been centralized to the point where even minor decisions required approval from the top. Initiative from below was regarded as a threat to control. The same logic took hold in North Korea, where spontaneity and local decision-making were treated as signs of disloyalty. The slogan of "monolithic unity" was used to suppress any difference of opinion. In practice, this meant the subordination of the entire party to one man's thought, and of the entire nation to one party's commands.

The consequences of this system were profound. In a society where all decisions come from above, mistakes cannot be corrected because criticism is forbidden. Production goals were set not by the real capacity of workers but by political declarations. When targets proved impossible, reports were falsified to avoid punishment. Officials learned to value obedience over truth, and survival over honesty. The bureaucracy, instead of serving as a tool for planning, became a mechanism of concealment and self-preservation. Lenin had warned that

such a structure would turn the state into a parasite upon society. In North Korea, this warning was fulfilled with total precision.

The absence of collective decision-making also destroyed the intellectual vitality of the revolution. Under Lenin, the party was a school of theory and practice, where workers learned to think as rulers and administrators. In North Korea, thought itself became dangerous. Ideological study was reduced to memorizing the leader's speeches. The party no longer educated; it indoctrinated. The creative energy of the working class, which should have been directed toward transforming society, was replaced by the mechanical repetition of slogans. The living dialectic of Marxist theory was suffocated by the ritual of obedience.

What emerged from this command structure was not the unity of a conscious working class but the uniformity of a silenced population. The state and the party no longer served as instruments for organizing the people's collective will but as instruments for enforcing submission. Lenin had built the party as a means to awaken the workers to their own power; North Korea built it to keep the workers powerless. In the Stalinistic command system, the revolutionary hierarchy was frozen into permanent authority.

Thus, North Korea's system of decision-making represents the complete inversion of Lenin's idea of the party of the new type. The collective leadership of the conscious workers was replaced by personal command; the democracy of criticism was replaced by the obedience of fear. The bureaucracy, freed from accountability, became a ruling caste whose only purpose was to preserve its control. The result is a political structure that calls itself socialist but embodies the very principle Marxism sought to overcome — the domination of the many by the few.

One of the clearest signs that North Korea diverged from true Marxism-Leninism was the rise of a bureaucratic caste that lives apart from the people. In theory, the Korean Workers' Party claims to represent the working class and to uphold equality among all citizens. In reality, it has created a privileged social stratum whose existence contradicts every principle laid down by Lenin in *State and Revolution*. This caste does not own factories or land as private property, but it controls access to all goods, positions, and opportunities. Its authority, inherited through family ties and political loyalty, forms a new structure of inequality within a system that calls itself classless.

Lenin warned of this danger at the very birth of the Soviet state. He wrote that bureaucratic privilege and separation from the masses would reintroduce class distinctions even under socialism if not relentlessly fought. To prevent this, Lenin demanded that all officials be elected, recallable, and paid no more than the average worker. This was not an abstract moral command but a safeguard against the rebirth of exploitation. The workers' state, he said, must be based on the simplest administrative forms and direct participation of the people, so that no one could rise above others as a ruler. Only through strict equality could the revolutionary state remain a tool of the proletariat rather than a power over it.

North Korea's political practice ignored these Leninist principles completely. From the beginning, party and state officials were granted material privileges that placed them far

above the working population. The upper ranks of the Korean Workers' Party live in separate residential areas, receive higher-quality food and medical care, and send their children to elite schools inaccessible to ordinary citizens. The system of special distribution — the *special supply* (teukgong) — provides them with imported goods, luxury items, and services reserved for those deemed politically reliable. This network of privilege ensures loyalty but destroys solidarity. The bureaucrat and the worker no longer share the same conditions of life, and therefore cannot share the same consciousness.

This separation created a new social hierarchy that mirrors the very class relations Marx and Lenin sought to abolish. At the top stand those who command; at the bottom, those who labor. The officials' material advantage is justified through ideology: they are described as the "brain of the revolution," guiding the people with wisdom and sacrifice. But in reality, their privileges depend on maintaining their distance from the people. They speak of the hardships of the working class while being shielded from them by the comforts of bureaucratic life. Their lives contradict the socialist ideal of equality and collective responsibility.

The bureaucratic caste also reproduces itself through hereditary privilege. High-ranking officials often pass their positions and advantages to their children, who are educated in special institutions and later integrated into the same apparatus of power. In this way, political loyalty replaces merit, and birth replaces class consciousness. This hereditary continuity gives the bureaucracy the character of a new ruling class, one that maintains its dominance not through private ownership but through monopoly of authority and access. It is the continuation of class society by political means.

The economic privileges of this caste are accompanied by symbolic ones. The bureaucrats enjoy reverence, respect, and immunity. Their words carry the weight of law, and their mistakes are rarely punished. Criticism of their actions is impossible, for criticism of an official is easily interpreted as criticism of the leader. The people are taught to treat the ruling stratum as a sacred hierarchy — the extension of the leader's will. Thus, privilege is reinforced not only by material benefits but by ideology. The bureaucratic order presents itself as natural and eternal, much as feudal hierarchies once did.

In the Leninist conception, such inequality would be seen as a fatal disease of the workers' state. Lenin understood that socialism could not survive if a privileged layer separated itself from the masses. He insisted that the revolution's vitality depended on the active participation and equality of all. In North Korea, the opposite has occurred: the bureaucracy has become the guardian of its own privilege, while the masses are reduced to instruments of production and obedience. The officials, once supposed to be the servants of the people, have become their masters.

This violation of equality has profound moral and political consequences. It breeds cynicism among the people and corruption within the bureaucracy. Promotions depend not on ability or revolutionary devotion but on loyalty, connections, and family background. Fear and competition replace solidarity. The working class, deprived of real participation, becomes

demoralized, while the bureaucratic caste consolidates its rule under the false banner of socialism.

Thus, the North Korean state, in direct contradiction to Lenin's vision, stands upon a social division between the privileged few and the impoverished many. The officials who proclaim the equality of the people live in conditions of luxury; the workers who build the state live in hardship. This inversion of Marxist-Leninist principles reveals the true character of the regime: not a dictatorship of the proletariat, but a dictatorship over the proletariat. The bureaucratic caste is the new bourgeoisie of a state that calls itself communist.

In this system, Lenin's demand that "every cook must learn to govern" has been transformed into its opposite: only those chosen by the bureaucracy may govern, and the cook must serve. The revolution that was supposed to abolish class rule has produced a new class of rulers, whose power depends on maintaining the illusion that they act for the people while living apart from them. This is the ultimate betrayal of Lenin's egalitarian principle — the transformation of the revolutionary party into a privileged caste that uses the language of socialism to justify its domination.

When viewed through the lens of Marx and Lenin's scientific thought, it becomes clear that the so-called "party rule" in North Korea is not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the dictatorship of a bureaucratic minority. The Korean Workers' Party, which claims to embody the will of the working class, in practice stands above it as a separate power. It governs not *through* the workers, but *over* them. The bureaucracy that controls the party, the state, and the army forms a privileged stratum whose existence contradicts the very foundation of Marxist-Leninist communism.

Lenin's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat meant the direct and conscious rule of the working class — a system in which the majority, organized through their soviets and party, takes control of the means of production and begins to transform society. It was to be a dictatorship only in the sense of breaking the resistance of the exploiters; it was at the same time the highest form of democracy for the workers themselves. The masses were to participate actively in administration, criticism, and collective decision-making. This dictatorship was not to establish a new hierarchy, but to abolish all hierarchies by gradually eliminating the state itself.

In North Korea, this principle was turned upside down. The working class has no direct control over production, policy, or the state. It obeys commands issued by the bureaucracy and enforced by the police and the army. The party does not transmit the workers' will upward but transmits the leader's will downward. What is called "the leading role of the party" is in fact the absolute control of the party apparatus — and within that apparatus, of a small elite — over every sphere of life. This elite makes decisions, distributes resources, and defines truth itself. The workers' role is to execute and praise.

The bureaucracy in North Korea has become an independent social power, detached from the productive base of society. Its members do not derive their authority from labor or revolutionary merit but from position and loyalty. Their privileges in material comfort,

education, and influence depend on maintaining the system as it is. Thus, they have a vested interest in preserving inequality, hierarchy, and obedience — precisely the conditions that Marxism sought to abolish. In their hands, the socialist state has become a mechanism for self-preservation, not for transition toward communism.

This transformation marks the full triumph of the Stalinistic system. Just as Stalin's bureaucracy in the Soviet Union turned the organs of workers' power into organs of control, the North Korean bureaucracy has done the same. The soviets never took root; instead, there arose a vast administrative pyramid whose every layer depends on the one above. The masses are mobilized for production, for public displays of loyalty, and for endless campaigns of devotion, but never for genuine decision-making. The dictatorship of the proletariat — which in Lenin's conception was the rule of the majority for its own liberation — has been replaced by the dictatorship of a minority that rules in the name of the majority while suppressing it.

This bureaucratic dictatorship has its own ideology and rituals. It presents itself as the highest expression of socialism, equating loyalty to the leader with loyalty to the people. It speaks of unity, yet that unity is enforced through fear and surveillance. It speaks of equality, yet that equality ends where privilege begins. It celebrates the workers in speech but silences them in practice. Every institution, from the trade unions to the mass organizations, functions not as an organ of the workers' will but as an instrument for transmitting orders.

The contradiction could not be more complete: the state that calls itself "the people's state" excludes the people from power; the party that calls itself "the vanguard of the working class" commands the working class as a disciplined army; the revolution that promised liberation has created submission. The bureaucratic minority, acting in the name of the workers, has replaced the exploiters whom the revolution overthrew.

In the final analysis, North Korea's "party rule" reveals the total inversion of Lenin's idea of socialist governance. Where Lenin demanded the continuous deepening of workers' democracy, North Korea established the permanence of bureaucratic control. Where Lenin called for the reduction and eventual disappearance of the state, North Korea sanctified the state as eternal. Where Lenin envisioned equality among all comrades, North Korea produced a new hierarchy cloaked in revolutionary slogans.

Therefore, the North Korean system represents not the dictatorship of the proletariat but the dictatorship *over* the proletariat — a dictatorship of bureaucracy and privilege masquerading as socialism. The party that should have been the vanguard of the working class has become its overseer. The working people, instead of being the conscious subjects of history, are treated as instruments for the glorification of the ruling caste and the perpetuation of the leader's cult.

The true Marxist-Leninist path would require the reawakening of proletarian democracy — the restoration of workers' control, equality, and participation — and the dismantling of bureaucratic privilege. Only when the state again becomes the instrument of the working people, rather than their master, can the revolutionary process resume. Until then, North Korea's so-called "party rule" remains what it has always been: a Stalinistic system of

domination, a state where bureaucracy reigns in the name of the people while silencing their voice.

## The Economic System: Command, Not Socialist

Marxism defines socialism not by slogans, nationalizations, or state control, but by a fundamental transformation in the social relations of production. The essence of socialist economy is not the mere transfer of property from private individuals to the state, but the establishment of *social ownership* — the collective control of the means of production by the working class itself. It is this transformation of ownership and control that abolishes exploitation and makes labor truly free. The aim is to replace production for profit, which serves the accumulation of a minority, with production for *human need*, serving the collective welfare and development of all.

In Marx's view, under capitalism the worker is separated from the means of production and from the products of his labor. The factory, the land, and the tools belong to a class of owners, while the worker sells his labor-power as a commodity. Exploitation arises because the worker produces more value than he receives in wages — the surplus appropriated by the capitalist. Socialism, therefore, must overcome this separation. The means of production are to become common property, so that no class can live from the labor of others. The worker no longer sells his labor to a master; he becomes both producer and administrator of the collective wealth.

Lenin developed this Marxist principle into a concrete economic program for the revolutionary state. In *State and Revolution* and later writings, he emphasized that nationalization alone does not create socialism unless it is accompanied by workers' control. The nationalization of industry without the participation of the working class merely transfers ownership from private capitalists to state bureaucrats. The task of the proletariat is not to build a new apparatus of domination, but to organize production through its own organs — factory committees, trade unions, and soviets — ensuring that administration is carried out by the producers themselves. Lenin saw this as a process of education: through collective management, the working people would learn to govern society and thus begin the disappearance of the state.

A truly socialist economy, therefore, is characterized by *workers' control*. This means direct and conscious participation of the producers in managing enterprises, setting production goals, determining the use of resources, and distributing the social product. It is the realization of Marx's vision of "the associated producers" who regulate their own labor in accordance with social needs. Such an economy eliminates the division between those who command and those who obey, between mental and manual labor, between the planner and the worker. It replaces the coercion of wage labor with voluntary cooperation and creative initiative.

Planning, in the Marxist sense, arises naturally from this collective control. It is not a system of orders imposed from above, but a process of coordination by the freely associated producers. The aim of planning is not to extract surplus or accumulate power, but to harmonize human activity with social needs and material possibilities. It represents the conscious regulation of production by society as a whole, replacing the anarchy of the market with deliberate organization. Lenin envisioned this as the essence of socialist economy — the first time in history that humanity would govern its material life consciously rather than being ruled by blind economic forces.

In such a planned system, the measure of success is not output or profit, but the satisfaction of human needs and the full development of human capacities. The economy is no longer an alien power standing over people; it becomes an extension of their collective will. Labor, freed from compulsion, becomes not a burden but a creative activity. The distribution of goods follows the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work" in the transitional stage, and later, as abundance grows, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." This is the vision of socialism as both an economic and moral transformation — the end of exploitation, competition, and class privilege.

This Marxist and Leninist conception stands in absolute contrast to the command economy that later developed in Stalinistic systems, including North Korea. There, the nationalization of property did not lead to workers' control or planning for human need, but to bureaucratic control and planning for state power. The working class remained alienated from its labor, not by private owners but by administrators acting in the name of socialism. The state became the new collective capitalist, extracting surplus through political command instead of market exchange.

Thus, before examining the North Korean economy in its concrete form, it is essential to recall these fundamental Marxist principles. Socialism is not the rule of the plan over the worker, but the rule of the worker over the plan. It is not production for the glory of the state, but production for the fulfillment of human life. It is not compulsion, but participation; not hierarchy, but equality. Without these foundations — social ownership combined with workers' control and production for need — the term "socialist economy" loses its meaning and becomes, as in North Korea, a mask for the continuation of oppression under new forms.

Although North Korea calls its system socialist, its economy reproduces exploitation under new and disguised forms. The abolition of private property and the nationalization of all major industries did not bring the workers into possession of the means of production. Instead, control passed to the state bureaucracy, which now exercises the same authority that private capitalists once held. The difference is only in form: under capitalism, the worker obeys the will of the private owner; under North Korea's system, he obeys the will of the bureaucrat. In both cases, he remains alienated from the fruits of his labor. The bureaucracy, acting through administrative command, has become the new collective capitalist, extracting surplus not for profit but for the maintenance of its own power.

The structure of production in North Korea reveals this clearly. Factories, farms, and cooperatives operate under strict orders from central planning organs, which determine

production targets, labor assignments, and distribution quotas. These targets are not decided by the workers who labor within these institutions, but by bureaucratic offices in Pyongyang. The worker is told what to produce, how much to produce, and at what pace. His labor is measured not by its social usefulness but by its conformity to state directives. Failure to meet quotas is treated as political disobedience, not as an issue of economic adjustment. This system converts the workplace into a site of coercion rather than cooperation, repeating the basic relation of exploitation: command and obedience.

Forced labor is one of the most visible manifestations of this system. The worker's participation in production is not voluntary or self-directed but compulsory. The state imposes production norms that often exceed physical limits, enforced by party officials and workplace monitors. In times of economic crisis, "voluntary labor campaigns" are organized, in which workers, students, and peasants are compelled to work extra hours without compensation under the banner of revolutionary enthusiasm. These campaigns, celebrated in propaganda as demonstrations of socialist devotion, in reality represent the extraction of unpaid labor — the very definition of exploitation. The glorification of "selfless labor" serves to disguise the absence of real choice.

The hierarchy within the economy mirrors the political hierarchy of the state. Factory directors, party secretaries, and government administrators hold power over the workers, deciding not only their tasks but their living conditions. Advancement depends not on skill or creativity but on political loyalty. This destroys initiative and reinforces obedience. The bureaucratic elite receives privileges in rations, housing, and access to goods, while the laboring population faces shortages and deprivation. The division between mental and manual labor, which Marx and Lenin sought to abolish, is preserved in its most rigid form: those who plan and direct live apart from those who produce.

In this structure, the worker is alienated not only from the product of his labor but from the process itself. He has no control over the conditions of work, no voice in management, and no right to criticize. The trade unions, which in Marxist theory are supposed to be schools of socialism and organs of workers' control, function in North Korea as instruments of discipline. Their task is not to defend workers' interests but to transmit the party's orders. Instead of uniting the workers for collective action, they supervise attendance, performance, and political conformity. The result is a labor system based on obedience, fear, and competition for official favor — the very opposite of socialist solidarity.

The economic plan itself reflects the same command principle. Instead of being the expression of social need, it serves the political interests of the bureaucracy. Production is directed toward military strength and the display of state power rather than the improvement of the people's material life. Enormous resources are devoted to the army and prestige projects while consumer goods remain scarce. The worker's sacrifice is glorified as patriotic duty, but his needs are ignored. This distortion of planning — from social coordination to bureaucratic compulsion — transforms the economy into a mechanism for maintaining the state, not serving humanity.

In true socialist planning, the worker would consciously decide how to distribute social labor and resources. In North Korea, he executes decisions he did not make. His creativity, which should be the driving force of production, is replaced by forced enthusiasm. His voice, which should direct planning, is silenced by fear of accusation. This is not the economic democracy envisioned by Marx and Lenin but its absolute negation.

Therefore, North Korea's economy reproduces exploitation in new form: the wage worker is not freed but transformed into a state subject. The command of capital is replaced by the command of bureaucracy. The surplus produced by the workers is not appropriated privately but collectively by an administrative class, which uses it to maintain its privileges and expand state power. The rhetoric of socialism conceals the reality of oppression. Beneath the slogans of equality lies a system that demands the same submission and endurance once demanded by capitalist masters.

This continuity of exploitation under new symbols is the hallmark of the Stalinistic economic model. It retains the external appearance of socialism — state ownership, planning, collective slogans — while reproducing the internal reality of alienation, hierarchy, and coercion. The worker is still exploited, but now in the name of the people. The tragedy of North Korea lies in this contradiction: the system claims to have abolished exploitation, yet it survives by perpetuating it under the banner of socialism.

Lenin's analysis of the economic transition to socialism was grounded in the conviction that the new society could not be created by decrees, nor imposed by state compulsion, but must emerge from the conscious activity of the working people themselves. The revolution, he wrote, does not end with the seizure of power; it begins there. The transformation of the economy requires not merely the change of ownership, but the re-education of society. The workers must learn to administer production, manage distribution, and plan collectively. This process demands *self-management, initiative,* and *education* — the active participation of the masses in organizing their own labor.

Lenin never viewed socialism as a mechanical system of orders. He saw it as a living movement that develops through the growth of human consciousness. In *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* and other writings, he argued that the new economy could succeed only if the working people themselves took part in management. The soviets, factory committees, and trade unions were to become schools of administration, teaching workers to coordinate, calculate, and decide. The more the workers managed, the less the state would need to command. Through this participation, the people would overcome the old habits of subordination inherited from capitalism and learn to govern collectively.

For Lenin, initiative from below was the essence of socialism. He warned that if the revolution replaced the capitalist owners with bureaucratic directors, socialism would fail in its purpose. The state must guide, not dictate; it must organize, not dominate. The people, through practice and education, were to develop the skills of self-government. Only in this way could the new economy become a system of conscious cooperation rather than compulsion. Education, therefore, was not simply schooling but the awakening of human

potential — the development of the worker from an instrument of labor into a free, thinking participant in collective life.

The North Korean system rejected this entire conception. Instead of encouraging initiative and self-management, it created an economy governed by military and administrative command. The structure of production was organized as a hierarchy modeled on the army, where every individual has a fixed rank and duty, and obedience is absolute. Orders flow downward; responsibility flows upward. Planning is not the coordination of the producers' will but the transmission of state directives. In this system, there is no room for independent thought or creative initiative. The worker who proposes an improvement risks being accused of "deviation" or "selfishness." The economy functions not as a community of producers but as a barracks of labor.

The military character of the North Korean economy stems from its political foundation. The regime has built its legitimacy on the claim of permanent external threat. The people are told that survival depends on unity and discipline, that every factory is a fortress and every worker a soldier. This ideology, known as the "military-first" or *Songun* policy, subordinates all economic activity to the needs of defense. Production is not organized for the satisfaction of human needs but for the expansion of military capacity and the glorification of the state. The result is an economy in which the army receives the best resources while the civilian population endures shortages.

This militarization of economic life destroys the essence of socialist planning. Instead of cooperation, there is command; instead of voluntary labor, there is mobilization. Workers are subjected to political drills, ideological sessions, and endless campaigns demanding "speed battles" and "production miracles." Such campaigns are not the expression of collective enthusiasm but instruments of pressure. They substitute emotional coercion for conscious participation. The worker's value is measured not by skill or creativity but by obedience and endurance.

Education, which Lenin saw as the foundation of socialism, is in North Korea reduced to indoctrination. Schools and factories do not cultivate initiative or technical competence but loyalty. The goal is not to produce self-reliant citizens but disciplined followers. The worker learns to repeat the leader's words, not to think critically about production. Technical innovation is limited to what serves the state's military or ideological goals. The result is stagnation masked by propaganda. The population may be literate, but it is not educated in the socialist sense — not trained in self-government or creative cooperation.

In Lenin's view, the transition to socialism must humanize work, transforming it from a burden into a free expression of collective intelligence. In North Korea, work remains alien and coercive. The worker does not direct production; production directs him. He labors not for the fulfillment of common needs but for the demands of authority. The military-industrial economy converts human beings into instruments of state power. This is not the building of socialism but its negation — the re-creation of the division between those who command and those who obey, between the rulers of production and its executors.

The contrast between Lenin's vision and North Korea's reality could not be sharper. Lenin's socialism was to be a step toward freedom; North Korea's command economy is a step back into servitude. Lenin's transition relied on the self-activity of the masses; North Korea's system depends on their submission. Lenin sought to educate the people to govern themselves; North Korea educates them to glorify the state. The economy that was meant to serve human development has been turned into an instrument of political domination.

In short, the North Korean economic order transforms Marxism from a theory of liberation into a doctrine of control. It speaks of collective ownership but enforces bureaucratic monopoly. It calls for planning but practices militarized coercion. It claims to serve the people while demanding their total obedience. By denying self-management, initiative, and education, it has stripped socialism of its living content and replaced it with the lifeless mechanism of command — a machine that produces not freedom, but discipline; not prosperity, but submission.

The inevitable outcome of an economy governed by bureaucracy and command, rather than by the self-activity and consciousness of the working people, is stagnation, waste, and inequality. In North Korea, the rigid control of production by a privileged administrative caste has produced a cycle of mismanagement that has repeatedly led to famine and chronic shortages. These crises are not accidental nor the result of external pressure alone, but the direct product of a system that denies workers any participation in economic planning and suppresses open criticism. Without the free initiative of the producers, production becomes mechanical; without the creative thought of the masses, errors multiply; and without the right to speak truth to power, disaster becomes inevitable.

In Lenin's conception, socialist planning must rest upon the conscious participation of the entire working class. The plan is not a document issued from above but the living expression of collective intelligence — the summation of experience from every factory, farm, and commune. It is through this continuous feedback between the people and their institutions that mistakes are recognized and corrected. In North Korea, by contrast, planning is carried out by bureaucratic offices isolated from the realities of labor and production. Officials report not what exists, but what the leadership wants to hear. Statistics are falsified, successes exaggerated, failures concealed. This distortion, born of fear and careerism, prevents the detection of errors until they become catastrophes.

The famines that have struck North Korea, most notably in the 1990s, are the clearest evidence of this systemic failure. While official propaganda blamed natural disasters, the real cause lay in the disorganization of production and distribution created by the command system. Central planners dictated unrealistic production targets, and local officials falsified figures to meet them. The result was chaos: grain shipments misdirected, reserves misallocated, and shortages ignored until it was too late. The rigid control of information prevented the country from mobilizing rationally to avert disaster. Farmers, deprived of decision-making power and punished for initiative, had no means to adapt to changing conditions. Thus, hundreds of thousands perished — victims not of nature, but of bureaucratic blindness.

Shortages, both chronic and cyclical, remain a permanent feature of this system. Because production is driven by political directives rather than by assessment of real needs, the economy produces abundance in some sectors and scarcity in others. Enormous resources are diverted to military industry and prestige projects, while consumer goods remain unavailable or of poor quality. The population endures rationing, yet the bureaucratic elite enjoys special distribution networks and guaranteed supplies. This contradiction between abundance for the rulers and scarcity for the people is the mark of all exploitative systems. It proves that nationalization without workers' control does not end inequality; it simply changes its form.

The persistence of inequality in North Korea reveals the complete absence of socialist consciousness within the ruling bureaucracy. True socialism demands that those who administer production live under the same conditions as the producers themselves, sharing their hardships and learning from their experience. In North Korea, officials and party members are separated from the workers by privilege and fear. They do not serve the people; they command them. Their comfort depends upon the continuation of the very inequalities they claim to oppose. In such conditions, no genuine socialist morality — no sense of collective responsibility or comradeship — can exist. The bureaucrat obeys not the needs of society but the interests of the hierarchy above him.

The absence of socialist consciousness is both a cause and a result of this system. Since the people are denied the right to think, decide, and criticize, they cannot develop the awareness that socialism requires — the understanding that society is their own creation, that its fate depends on their active participation. Without this consciousness, the population becomes passive, waiting for orders from above, accepting hardship as fate. The ruling ideology teaches submission, not responsibility; faith in the leader, not faith in the people. Lenin saw socialism as the awakening of the human mind to its collective power. In North Korea, consciousness has been replaced by obedience.

This absence of creative participation perpetuates material decay. Innovation is paralyzed, initiative punished, and talent wasted. Engineers and technicians are afraid to report problems or propose new methods, fearing accusations of "lack of loyalty." Agricultural workers are bound to state quotas that ignore local conditions, leading to soil exhaustion and declining yields. In industry, rigid targets encourage falsification rather than improvement. The result is an economy that consumes human energy without progress, sustained by propaganda rather than production.

The contrast with Lenin's vision could not be greater. Lenin believed that socialism would release human potential, that every worker would become a thinker and every thinker a worker. North Korea's bureaucracy, by suppressing thought, has turned labor into drudgery and intelligence into conformity. Its mismanagement produces material poverty, while its ideology breeds spiritual poverty. The famine and shortages that plague the country are not temporary misfortunes but permanent symptoms of a system in which the people do not rule.

Thus, the economic suffering of North Korea's workers is the measure of their political exclusion. The hunger in their homes mirrors the absence of their voice in the state. A truly socialist economy could not produce famine, for it would be directed by those who suffer its

effects and would correct its errors immediately. Only a system where decisions are made by a privileged minority, indifferent to the people's conditions, could allow such suffering to persist. The tragedy of North Korea is that it calls this exploitation socialism.

The bureaucratic command economy has proven incapable of feeding, clothing, or uplifting its people because it denies them the very thing Marx and Lenin saw as the foundation of socialism: conscious participation. Until the working people of Korea regain the right to manage their own life — to plan, criticize, and decide — the cycle of scarcity and privilege will continue, and the word "socialism" will remain an empty mask concealing the persistence of exploitation.

When examined through the lens of Marxist economic theory, the North Korean economy reveals itself not as socialist but as a form of *state capitalism* governed by a Stalinistic bureaucracy. Its external features—nationalization, planning, and the absence of private ownership—disguise the fact that the social relations of production remain exploitative. The means of production are nominally the property of the people, but in practice they are controlled by a bureaucratic caste that commands labor, appropriates the social surplus, and enjoys privileges derived from its administrative power. The worker, far from being the master of production, remains subordinated to a ruling class that dictates his labor and consumption.

In Marxist terms, capitalism is defined not by who owns property in name but by the existence of *alienated labor*—the separation of the worker from control over his work and its product. In North Korea, this separation persists in full force. The worker does not decide what to produce, how to produce, or how the fruits of labor are distributed. All such decisions are made by bureaucratic administrators acting on state directives. The surplus created by the working people is appropriated collectively by this bureaucratic stratum, which uses it to sustain its privileges, expand state power, and glorify the leader. This appropriation, though carried out through political rather than market means, has the same social essence as capitalist exploitation: the domination of the producers by those who command production.

The system thus functions as *state capitalism*—a form in which the capitalist class has been replaced by the state apparatus itself. The state acts as the universal employer, the universal buyer and seller, and the organizer of surplus extraction. The wage relation still exists: workers receive a fixed payment, often in kind, while producing value that they do not control. The difference between wage and product—surplus labor—is appropriated by the bureaucracy and redistributed according to political criteria. What under capitalism is profit becomes, under Stalinism, the material basis of bureaucratic privilege. The individual capitalist is replaced by the collective bureaucrat.

Lenin envisioned socialist planning as the conscious coordination of production by the associated workers. In North Korea, planning is not collective coordination but bureaucratic command. It serves not the satisfaction of human needs but the perpetuation of political authority. The plan functions as a tool of control, a means of mobilizing labor for goals defined by the ruling elite. Its success is measured not by improvement of life but by obedience and output. When plans fail, the workers bear the burden; when they succeed, the

bureaucracy claims the credit. This inversion of purpose—planning for the state instead of for the people—marks the difference between socialism and state capitalism.

The military-industrial structure of the North Korean economy deepens this contradiction. Enormous resources are diverted to the army and to prestige projects, while agriculture and consumer production remain neglected. The result is chronic scarcity for the people and luxury for the elite. The labor of millions sustains a state that presents itself as their protector while in reality exploiting them through forced production. The bureaucracy thus performs the same historical role as the bourgeoisie once did: it appropriates surplus and controls labor, though it does so under the banner of socialism.

True socialism, as Marx and Lenin taught, abolishes exploitation by transferring control of production to the workers themselves. In North Korea, exploitation persists, cloaked in revolutionary language. The bureaucratic class that rules in the name of the workers has become their master. The state, instead of beginning to disappear, has become the supreme capitalist, owning everything yet belonging to no one. It manages production as a giant enterprise whose primary product is obedience.

The Stalinistic bureaucracy that governs North Korea therefore represents not the completion of socialism but its negation. It preserves the external symbols of socialist economy—collective ownership, central planning, and the rhetoric of equality—while reproducing the internal reality of capitalist relations: hierarchy, alienation, and exploitation. The form is socialist; the content is bourgeois. This is why Marxists describe such systems as *state-capitalist*: they replace private profit with state power, but the worker remains unfree.

The tragedy of North Korea is that this system, while claiming to defend the revolution, has suffocated it. The bureaucratic order has frozen social development, silenced criticism, and transformed labor into a duty performed for the glory of the state rather than for human need. The people are mobilized endlessly but never emancipated. The socialist future that Marx, Engels, and Lenin envisioned—a society of free producers governing their own labor—has been replaced by a machine of command where human beings serve as cogs.

In conclusion, the economic system of North Korea stands as the full realization of Stalinism's economic logic: a state that owns everything yet serves no one, a bureaucracy that lives off the labor of the masses while calling it socialism. It is a *state-capitalist order*, in which the old relations of domination survive under new banners. Only the restoration of workers' control, free participation, and production for human need can transform such a system into genuine socialism. Until that day, North Korea's economy remains what it is — not a socialist economy in transition to freedom, but a bureaucratic capitalism frozen in the name of revolution.

## The Cult of the Leader: From Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Un

The cult of the leader is one of the most striking and destructive features of Stalinism, and it found its most extreme continuation in the political culture of North Korea. The idea that one man can embody the will of the people, personify the revolution, and stand above all institutions is not a continuation of Marxism-Leninism, but its negation. It transforms the collective struggle of the working class into a myth centered on the wisdom and infallibility of a single individual. This transformation of socialism into a religion of personality marks the death of proletarian democracy and the birth of bureaucratic absolutism.

In the writings of Marx and Lenin, there is no place for hero worship. Marx wrote that the emancipation of the workers must be *the act of the workers themselves*. The revolution, he insisted, cannot depend on the genius or will of any leader, but must grow from the conscious movement of the masses. Lenin likewise rejected personal glorification. Throughout his life, he resisted all attempts to turn him into a figure of adoration. He wrote that in a truly socialist movement, leadership is not a question of personal greatness but of collective responsibility and unity of purpose. The party, in his conception, was a school of thought and struggle, not a pedestal for one man's cult.

Stalin's rise to power marked the reversal of these principles. After Lenin's death, the bureaucracy that had already begun to separate itself from the working class needed a new ideological foundation for its rule. It found this in the elevation of Stalin into a symbolic father of the nation and protector of socialism. The cult of personality served a clear function: it sanctified authority, replaced collective leadership with personal command, and made criticism of the leader equivalent to treason. The leader became the state, and the state became his personal domain. Through this mechanism, the bureaucracy secured its legitimacy not through class participation, but through worship.

North Korea inherited this model from the very beginning of its existence. The Soviet occupation authorities, themselves steeped in Stalinistic methods, promoted Kim Il Sung as the "great liberator" and "commander of the revolution." His image was crafted to mirror that of Stalin: the wise teacher, the tireless worker, the military genius, the father of the people. The newly formed Korean Workers' Party built its entire legitimacy around his person, rather than around collective struggle or the self-organization of the working class. From this foundation grew a political culture in which the revolution was not a movement of the people, but the biography of a leader.

The cult of Kim Il Sung thus did not arise from Korean conditions alone; it was the deliberate reproduction of Stalin's system of personal rule. The methods were identical: control of education, rewriting of history, censorship of criticism, and the fusion of ideology with obedience. Every success was attributed to Kim's genius; every hardship was endured through his supposed guidance. The party, which should have been the vanguard of conscious workers, became the apparatus of his glorification. In every workplace, school, and army unit, his portrait was placed as an object of reverence. The study of Marxism was replaced by the study of Kim Il Sung's sayings, just as under Stalin the works of Marx and Lenin were reduced to quotations in praise of the leader.

This elevation of the leader to divine status transformed politics into ritual. Loyalty to the revolution became loyalty to the man who claimed to embody it. The people were taught that their history began and ended with Kim Il Sung; that their liberation, progress, and even survival depended on his wisdom. In such a system, there is no longer collective agency, only collective adoration. The leader's thought replaces the people's thought; his will becomes law. What had been in Marxism a movement for the disappearance of domination becomes, under the cult of personality, the total sanctification of domination.

Lenin's warnings against this very danger were explicit. In his last writings, he criticized the growing bureaucratization of the Soviet state and the tendency to treat leaders as infallible. He demanded that officials remain servants of the people, not masters. "We are not gods," he reminded his comrades, emphasizing that socialism could advance only through criticism, correction, and collective work. Stalin ignored these warnings, and Kim Il Sung reproduced the same structure in Korea, turning Lenin's modesty into its opposite — a cult of self-deification.

Thus, the origin of the leader cult lies in the social needs of the bureaucracy. A bureaucratic state cannot justify its rule by workers' participation, since that participation no longer exists. It therefore justifies itself by claiming divine wisdom in the person of the leader. The leader becomes the ideological mask that conceals class domination. His image is used to bind the masses emotionally to their rulers, to transform obedience into faith, and to prevent criticism by equating it with sacrilege. The cult of the leader is not a mistake or excess; it is a necessary instrument of bureaucratic power.

In this sense, North Korea did not simply imitate Stalin's cult — it perfected it. Stalin's worship faded after his death; Kim Il Sung's worship became institutionalized, hereditary, and eternal. The principle of personal infallibility, which Marx and Lenin rejected as reactionary, became the foundation of the state. Under its banner, the revolutionary idea of collective human emancipation was replaced by the worship of one man and his descendants. This marks the complete transition from Lenin's communism to the opposite — a bureaucratic theocracy wrapped in socialist symbols.

The succession of power from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il and then to Kim Jong Un represents one of the most complete negations of Marxism in history. What began as a movement claiming to liberate the working people from exploitation and hierarchy has transformed into a dynastic system, where leadership passes by blood rather than by collective decision. This hereditary principle — the transfer of power within a single family — stands in absolute contradiction to the Marxist idea of a classless society and the Leninist vision of a revolutionary party based on merit, participation, and accountability.

Under Marxism, all forms of hereditary privilege are to disappear along with class divisions. Marx described the historical mission of the proletariat as the abolition of all relations that elevate one group above another by birth or social position. In the communist future, leadership would not be inherited but chosen from among the conscious and capable workers according to need and ability. The revolution, as Marx and Engels conceived it, was the final break from feudal and bourgeois traditions of hereditary power. Lenin reaffirmed this

principle, insisting that the party of the working class must be based on collective leadership, democratic accountability, and equality of all comrades. The very idea of one man — or one family — ruling over the people was anathema to Marxism.

Yet in North Korea, this very principle of hereditary privilege became the foundation of the state. When Kim Il Sung died in 1994, power passed smoothly to his son Kim Jong Il, not through election, congress, or any form of collective choice, but through dynastic succession. The transition was prepared years in advance by the systematic glorification of Kim Jong Il as the "Dear Leader," the natural heir of his father's revolutionary legacy. State propaganda depicted him not as a political figure accountable to the people, but as the continuation of his father's spirit — a leader chosen by history itself. In this way, the political power of the working class was transformed into the private inheritance of a family.

Kim Jong Il's rule deepened the fusion of state, party, and dynasty. The cult of personality became hereditary, passed from father to son as a sacred duty. The bureaucratic apparatus, having lost any link to the working masses, bound its own survival to the preservation of the ruling family. Loyalty to socialism was replaced by loyalty to the Kims. The very language of Marxism was emptied of meaning: "the people" were now defined not as a class acting for their liberation, but as subjects bound by blood loyalty to the leader. The revolution, which was to abolish personal rule, had become its instrument.

When Kim Jong Il died in 2011, the same process was repeated. Power passed to his son Kim Jong Un, a man with no revolutionary background or political experience, whose authority derived solely from his birth. This was the final confirmation that North Korea had ceased to be even nominally Marxist. It had become a hereditary monarchy — the first in history to cloak itself in the language of socialism. Portraits, titles, and rituals were adjusted, but the substance remained unchanged: one family ruling an entire nation, perpetuating its power through ideological control and the bureaucratic apparatus it commanded.

This transformation was not simply political but structural. The hereditary system ensures the reproduction of privilege across generations, creating a permanent ruling class. The children of the elite inherit not only material advantages but positions in the party, army, and state. The working people, meanwhile, inherit only obedience. Thus, the revolutionary goal of a classless society is reversed: class divisions become hereditary, and hierarchy becomes eternal. The Kim family stands at the top as the symbolic apex of this new social order, while beneath them lies the bureaucracy, and beneath the bureaucracy, the people — disciplined, silenced, and poor.

In Lenin's writings, leadership was never an entitlement. It was a duty born of trust and subject to recall. Lenin warned repeatedly that if the party ceased to be accountable to the workers, it would degenerate into an instrument of domination. The hereditary succession of power in North Korea is precisely that degeneration in its most complete form. The working class does not elect its leaders, cannot criticize them, and cannot replace them. The idea that a single bloodline could embody the will of millions violates the most basic principle of Marxism: that history is made by the collective action of the masses, not by the will of individuals.

The Kim dynasty's existence exposes the class nature of North Korea's system. The hereditary principle is the clearest sign that a new ruling class has crystallized. The bureaucracy and the army, tied to the family by material interest and ideology, form the social base of this monarchy. Their loyalty is rewarded with privilege; their obedience ensures the continuation of the regime. This is the same mechanism that sustained feudal monarchies in the past — only now it wears the mask of "revolutionary socialism."

Thus, the transition from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un signifies not continuity of revolution but continuity of domination. The revolution that was supposed to liberate the working class from hierarchy has been converted into a hereditary hierarchy itself. The dream of a classless society has given way to a dynastic state where bloodline determines authority, and devotion replaces participation. This structure is not an aberration but the logical outcome of the Stalinistic model, which replaces the self-activity of the masses with the will of a single ruler.

The result is a political form that is neither socialist nor republican, but monarchical — a state where Marxism's ideals are recited while its substance is betrayed. The rule of the Kim family is the final proof that North Korea has not advanced toward communism but has regressed to a form of autocracy more absolute than any monarchy of the past, for it commands not only the state but the very thought of its subjects.

One of the most profound consequences of the leader cult in North Korea is the destruction of dialectical thought. Marxism, which was born as a method of critical inquiry into the movement of history, has been reduced there to a fixed dogma that serves the authority of the ruler. Instead of being a living, self-correcting science of social transformation, it has become a catechism of obedience. The dialectical method — the heart of Marx's and Lenin's scientific thought — has been replaced by ideological control, ensuring that thought itself can no longer challenge power.

For Marx and Lenin, the strength of socialist theory lies in its dialectical nature. Dialectics means the study of reality as a process of constant change, contradiction, and development. Marx rejected all forms of rigid dogmatism, insisting that ideas must reflect the living movement of society. He called communism not an ideal to be imposed but "the real movement which abolishes the present state of things." Lenin followed this principle, applying dialectical thought to every problem of revolution. For him, Marxism was not a fixed doctrine but a method — a tool for analysis, criticism, and action, always developing through practice and self-critique. The workers' movement, he said, could survive only through the freedom of discussion and the constant testing of ideas against reality.

In North Korea, this principle was deliberately destroyed. The leadership, beginning with Kim Il Sung, transformed Marxism from a method of critical understanding into a set of quotations and slogans used to sanctify authority. The dynamic, self-correcting spirit of Marxism was frozen into a static ideology known as *Juche*, which claims to develop Marxism-Leninism but in fact subordinates it to the glorification of the leader. Under *Juche*, all thought originates from the leader's wisdom, and all truth is verified by his words.

Contradiction, which in dialectical thought is the engine of progress, becomes forbidden; reality must conform to doctrine, not doctrine to reality.

This transformation served a political purpose. In a bureaucratic state where criticism is dangerous and power rests on personal infallibility, dialectical analysis — which exposes contradictions and seeks their resolution — is intolerable. The regime therefore replaced it with an ideological system that defines the leader as the source of all truth. The study of Marx, Engels, and Lenin was replaced by the study of Kim Il Sung's "teachings." The people were told that he had perfected Marxism, that his thought was superior because it expressed the Korean spirit. In this way, Marxism was nationalized, emptied of its international and scientific character, and turned into a mythology of the ruler's genius.

Education became the central instrument of this ideological control. From the first years of schooling, children are taught not to think critically, but to memorize and recite. History is rewritten to revolve entirely around the Kim family, presenting them as the creators of every achievement. Marxist concepts are distorted to support this narrative: class struggle becomes the struggle to defend the leader; revolution becomes loyalty to his will; socialism becomes obedience to his commands. The dialectic of history — the interaction between social forces — is erased and replaced with the story of one man's eternal wisdom. The people cease to be subjects of history and become its spectators.

Art, literature, and philosophy follow the same pattern. Every cultural production must serve "ideological purity," meaning conformity with the leader's image. Writers and artists are instructed to depict the people's love for the leader, not their real experiences or struggles. Intellectual life becomes ceremonial. The goal is no longer to explore truth but to reinforce faith. The result is an ideological desert where creativity and inquiry vanish, replaced by repetition and praise.

In such a system, the function of ideology is reversed. In Marxist theory, ideology reflects material conditions and is transformed as those conditions change. In North Korea, ideology determines material reality. The leadership's pronouncements are treated as law, and all facts must adjust to them. This inversion destroys the scientific spirit of Marxism. When the leader declares that the country is prosperous, hunger must be denied; when he proclaims progress, failure must be hidden. The state's control over thought becomes total because truth itself is no longer an objective relation between theory and practice — it is whatever the ruler declares.

This ideological control also serves to protect the bureaucracy. By monopolizing interpretation of Marxism, the regime shields itself from criticism. To question policy becomes to question the leader's thought; to question the leader's thought becomes to betray the revolution. The result is absolute intellectual paralysis. No one can analyze contradictions in the economy, the state, or society because all contradictions are said to have been solved by the leader's genius. The dialectic, which in Marxism is the instrument of truth, is replaced by dogma — the instrument of power.

Lenin warned precisely against this danger. He wrote that the vitality of socialism depends on "freedom of criticism and self-correction." Without it, the revolution hardens into bureaucracy and dogma. North Korea's transformation of Marxism into a state religion shows the full realization of that danger. The doctrine that once taught humanity to think historically has been turned into an ideological cage.

Thus, in North Korea, thought no longer serves the liberation of humanity but its enslavement. Marxism, which was meant to teach the working class to understand and change the world, has been stripped of its dialectical core and reduced to a political catechism used to maintain obedience. The leader's words are memorized, not analyzed; his image is worshiped, not questioned. The revolutionary science of Marx and Lenin has been converted into theology — a system of belief that demands faith, not understanding.

The result is the final triumph of bureaucratic ideology over human thought. Dialectics, which sought the movement of truth through contradiction, has been replaced by a monologue from above. The living spirit of Marxism has died under the weight of its Stalinistic distortion, reborn in North Korea as a tool for the preservation of power. It is no longer a guide to liberation, but a justification for rule — the philosophy not of revolution, but of obedience.

The cult of the leader in North Korea functions as a new form of religion — a state-engineered faith that replaces critical understanding with worship and transforms the people into passive believers. In this system, the leader is not presented merely as a political figure or even as a national hero; he is portrayed as an infallible being, the source of all truth, wisdom, and mercy. The people are taught to love, fear, and revere him as one would a god. This transformation of politics into faith represents the final stage of ideological domination, in which the masses internalize obedience and mistake submission for devotion.

Marx wrote that religion arises from alienation — that it is "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world." In the same way, the cult of the leader arises from the alienation of the people from their own collective power. When the working class no longer rules, when it cannot act as the subject of history, it seeks in the image of the leader the strength and meaning it has lost. The leader becomes the embodiment of hope in a society where the people are denied the capacity to create change. The bureaucracy thus gives them a substitute for their own agency: faith in a savior instead of confidence in themselves.

Lenin, following Marx, warned that such a condition was the opposite of socialist consciousness. In the revolutionary movement, faith must give way to knowledge, obedience to participation, and worship to self-activity. The people must learn to think, decide, and act as a collective subject, not to await salvation from above. In North Korea, this process has been reversed entirely. The cult of the leader has restored the very religious consciousness that Marxism sought to overcome. The leader's portraits hang in every home, his words are recited in schools, and his name is spoken with reverence. Every day begins and ends with acts of ritual devotion — bowing before his image, pledging loyalty to his legacy, thanking him for life itself.

These rituals are not mere propaganda; they are instruments of control that mold consciousness. They train individuals to suppress doubt, to merge personal identity with loyalty, and to experience obedience as moral virtue. Just as religion once sanctified the rule of kings and priests, the cult of the leader sanctifies the rule of the bureaucracy. The leader becomes the mediator between the people and the state, the source of legitimacy for every command. Criticism is not only forbidden but experienced as sin, as an act of sacrilege. Thus, the cult ensures not only external submission but internal compliance — it colonizes the very mind.

The structures of this political religion are deliberate and systematic. The *Juche* ideology functions as its theology, defining the leader as the creator of all progress and the guardian of the nation's destiny. His writings are treated as sacred texts; his deeds are commemorated in national festivals; his birthdays are holy days. Monuments to his glory dominate every city, and the people are compelled to make pilgrimages to them. Entire institutions exist to maintain the purity of this faith: ideological departments, loyalty examinations, and confession meetings where citizens are required to express repentance for insufficient devotion. The purpose of all this is to destroy critical thought and to bind each person emotionally to the leader's image.

This false consciousness transforms the worker's perception of society. In Marxist terms, false consciousness is the state in which people accept as natural and just those social relations that exploit them. In North Korea, the cult of the leader provides the ideological framework for this acceptance. The worker, hungry and overworked, is told that his suffering is an expression of loyalty and that endurance is his highest virtue. The shortages and hardships produced by bureaucratic mismanagement are reinterpreted as tests of faith. The leader is praised for providing what the people do not have, and every sacrifice is dedicated to him. Thus, material deprivation is sanctified; the more the people suffer, the greater the leader's glory becomes.

This mechanism ensures passivity. When all success and failure are attributed to the leader's will, the people cease to see themselves as capable of shaping their own future. They lose the sense of being subjects of history and become spectators of it. Political participation is replaced by ritual performance: parades, chants, and collective pledges. The act of thinking critically — of asking why hunger exists, why privilege endures, why the state never changes — becomes not only dangerous but meaningless within this worldview. The cult of the leader, like the old religions of oppression, offers emotional consolation while maintaining material servitude.

Marx taught that liberation begins when people understand that their suffering is not fate but the result of human relations that can be changed. In North Korea, this understanding has been buried under the weight of myth. The leader cult denies the people the very consciousness that could free them. It replaces awareness of exploitation with gratitude for subjugation. The bureaucracy sustains this false faith because it is the foundation of its rule. As long as the people believe that their lives depend on the leader's benevolence, they will not demand control over their own existence.

The result is a complete reversal of socialist consciousness. Where Marxism sought to awaken reason, the leader cult enforces belief. Where Lenin sought to organize workers as active creators of society, the cult reduces them to worshippers. The state that should have been a tool for human emancipation has become a temple of authority. The red flag of revolution has been transformed into a sacred banner of obedience.

Thus, in North Korea, the cult of the leader is not a mere distortion of Marxism but its total negation. It functions as a political religion whose purpose is to preserve hierarchy and passivity. It feeds upon the people's alienation, offering them a divine father in place of collective power. As long as this false consciousness prevails, no revolution is possible, for the people will look upward for salvation instead of within themselves for strength. The cult of the leader is the new opium — not of religion, but of socialism betrayed.

The cult system that dominates North Korea today stands in complete opposition to the ideas of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. What claims to be socialism has become a hereditary despotism; what calls itself the people's power is in truth the people's submission. The revolutionary project of collective human liberation has been replaced by obedience to a family dynasty that rules in the name of socialism while embodying everything socialism sought to abolish.

For Marx, the liberation of humanity begins when people recognize that their own collective labor creates society. The working class, by organizing consciously and democratically, becomes the agent of history. The revolution is not the work of a few individuals but of millions who rise together to end exploitation and domination. In this vision, leadership is temporary and functional, not sacred or hereditary. Power exists only to dissolve itself into the self-administration of free producers. Lenin continued this principle, building a party that was to be the vanguard of the workers — disciplined, yes, but accountable and collective in spirit. He warned that if the party ever ceased to serve the people and became an authority above them, it would betray the revolution.

North Korea's cult of the leader is the opposite of this idea in every respect. It transforms history from the movement of classes into the biography of a family. The workers no longer appear as the makers of their destiny but as the followers of the "Great Leader" and his descendants. The socialist project, which was to abolish personal rule, has been captured by it. The revolution that promised to destroy hierarchy now sustains it in its most archaic form — dynastic succession.

Kim Il Sung's system, passed to Kim Jong Il and then to Kim Jong Un, demonstrates how bureaucratic privilege and ideological manipulation can recreate class rule within the shell of socialism. The leader's authority is presented as eternal, inherited by blood, and sanctified by ritual. The party, the army, and the state function not as instruments of the people but as guardians of the dynasty. The working class, instead of being the master of the state, is reduced to an audience for its ceremonies. This hereditary power structure revives the logic of feudalism under the red flag.

The cult system is anti-Marxist because it denies the collective nature of history. Marxism teaches that progress arises from contradiction, struggle, and the conscious activity of the

masses. The leader cult suppresses contradiction, forbids struggle, and replaces activity with worship. It replaces the dialectic of material development with the dogma of personal perfection. It transforms Marxism from a science of social change into a theology of loyalty. The people's creativity is stifled; their intelligence, silenced. The social process that was meant to free them becomes a mechanism to enslave their thought.

It is equally anti-Leninist because it destroys the principle of collective leadership and proletarian democracy. Lenin's concept of the party rested upon the unity of discipline and freedom — freedom of criticism, freedom of discussion, and the equality of all comrades. North Korea's system allows none of these. The leader is infallible; his words are the final law. Party congresses exist only to approve decisions already made, and political education is replaced by memorization of the leader's speeches. Lenin's idea that every worker must learn to govern has been reversed into the command that every worker must obey.

By sanctifying one family above the collective, the North Korean state has re-established class society under socialist slogans. The bureaucracy, tied to the Kim dynasty by privilege and fear, forms the new ruling class. It reproduces its power through hereditary succession, through ideological control, and through the cult of obedience. This structure guarantees the permanence of domination and the impossibility of renewal. No criticism can arise, no reform can succeed, because all truth and authority are monopolized by the dynasty itself.

The result is the transformation of a revolution into a religion. The banner of Marxism, once raised for human emancipation, now covers a system of servitude. The language of socialism has been emptied of its content, and the ideal of equality has been replaced by veneration of a bloodline. In this system, the worker is no longer a creator of history but a worshipper of it. The state no longer moves toward disappearance but toward eternity.

Thus, the cult of the leader — from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Un — is the final expression of Stalinistic degeneration: a political religion that replaces the power of the people with the worship of a dynasty. It is anti-Marxist because it denies collective liberation; it is anti-Leninist because it destroys workers' democracy. Its existence proves that where the people lose control over their own revolution, the vacuum is filled not by socialism but by hierarchy, myth, and fear.

True communism can arise only when this false religion of power is dismantled, when the people recover their consciousness as creators of society, and when the revolution once again becomes what Marx and Lenin intended it to be — the self-liberation of humanity by its own collective hands.

## The Condition of the People: Repression, Fear and Forced Labor

The true measure of any social system lies not in its slogans but in the condition of its people. In Marxist-Leninist thought, socialism is defined by the self-activity of the working class — by the workers' conscious participation in governing and transforming society. The

revolution, as Lenin wrote, must awaken the creative initiative of the masses; without their active role, socialism degenerates into a hollow form. In North Korea, this principle has been completely betrayed. The people, who should be the rulers of the new society, live under a structure of surveillance, fear, and coercion. Their labor is not an expression of freedom but of compulsion; their unity is not voluntary but enforced.

The North Korean state has created a system of total control that reaches into every aspect of life. The country is divided into a network of neighborhood and workplace organizations, each responsible for monitoring the behavior, speech, and even private opinions of its members. Every citizen is assigned to an *inminban* (people's group), headed by a party-appointed leader who reports regularly to the local authorities. These groups function not as organs of workers' cooperation but as instruments of surveillance. They ensure that no independent association, discussion, or initiative can exist outside the party's control. In factories, schools, and collective farms, workers are watched by political officers who enforce ideological discipline. Every conversation, every meeting, every movement is potentially subject to scrutiny.

This pervasive system of observation destroys the possibility of trust and solidarity among the people. Fear replaces comradeship. The worker does not see his fellow worker as a comrade in struggle but as a possible informant. Spontaneous organization — the essence of workers' self-activity in Marxist thought — becomes impossible. Trade unions, which in true socialism are meant to be organs of workers' power and education, are reduced to administrative bodies that transmit orders from above. Their purpose is not to defend the workers but to ensure obedience. Strikes, petitions, or protests — the normal expressions of collective will — are treated as crimes against the state.

The most brutal instrument of this control is the system of labor camps, known as *kwanliso* and *kyohwaso*. In these camps, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and even children are imprisoned, often without trial, for political offenses or for acts as trivial as expressing doubt about the leader. Entire families can be condemned under the doctrine of "guilt by association." Inside the camps, forced labor is used both as punishment and as a source of economic exploitation. Prisoners are compelled to work long hours in mines, construction sites, or fields, often under starvation conditions, producing goods for the state. The official ideology describes this as "reform through labor," but in reality it is a system of terror that serves to discipline the entire population.

Lenin's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was the very opposite of such repression. For Lenin, the new workers' state was to destroy the machinery of coercion inherited from the old ruling class. He insisted that the revolution must reduce the role of the police and bureaucracy, replacing them with the self-organization of the working masses. Power was to pass to the soviets — councils of workers and peasants elected from below, directly accountable to those who chose them. These organs were to embody the collective will of the people, not to suppress it. Lenin wrote that "the working people must themselves guard order, manage the economy, and decide all public matters." In such a state, there could be no place

for secret police, censorship, or camps, for these are the instruments of a ruling minority against the majority.

The North Korean system, by contrast, has resurrected and perfected those very instruments. The bureaucracy has rebuilt the repressive state machinery that Lenin sought to dismantle, justifying it in the name of "defending socialism." In practice, this defense serves only to protect the privileges of the ruling caste. The people live under the constant threat of punishment, which extends beyond their own lives to their families. The fear of the camps ensures silence, and silence ensures submission.

The absence of free organization in North Korea is not accidental but structural. The bureaucracy understands that independent workers' organizations would immediately expose the falsehood of its claim to represent the proletariat. For this reason, every form of association — from workplace groups to youth leagues — is created and controlled by the party. Even the smallest cooperative or cultural circle operates under supervision. What Lenin described as the "free association of producers" has been replaced by the compulsory mobilization of subjects.

This system of control not only represses the people but deforms their consciousness. Living under constant surveillance, the individual learns to conceal thoughts, to repeat slogans, and to appear loyal. The result is a population that acts out obedience without conviction. The state presents this conformity as unity, but it is unity born of fear, not of shared purpose. Lenin's dream of a society guided by conscious workers has been replaced by a society of coerced subjects.

Thus, the contrast between Lenin's principle of workers' self-activity and North Korea's reality could not be greater. Where Lenin envisioned a people organizing themselves freely, North Korea's bureaucracy organizes them through force. Where Lenin saw the state as a temporary tool to be dismantled by the people, North Korea has made the state an instrument of permanent domination. Where Lenin demanded the disappearance of coercion, North Korea has institutionalized it as a way of life.

In Marxist terms, the North Korean system is a form of counter-revolution: it preserves the language of socialism while restoring the essence of oppression. The worker, who should be the creator of a new world, is reduced to an object of surveillance and discipline. His labor serves not the collective good but the maintenance of the bureaucratic state. The machinery of coercion, once justified as a defense against imperialism, has become a weapon against the people themselves.

This is not the rule of the working class but its imprisonment. The dictatorship of the proletariat has been replaced by the dictatorship over the proletariat — a system in which fear substitutes for conviction, obedience replaces initiative, and silence passes for loyalty. The people who should be free builders of socialism live as its captives, proving that without workers' self-activity there can be no socialism at all.

In Marxist thought, labor is not merely a technical or economic activity; it is the essence of human life — the conscious transformation of nature through collective effort. Marx wrote that through labor, humanity becomes aware of its own power, shaping both the material world and its own consciousness. Under capitalism, this creative potential is distorted, for labor becomes alienated: the worker no longer controls the conditions or purpose of his work, and the product of his labor confronts him as an alien power. The goal of socialism, therefore, is to restore labor to its human meaning — to make it free, conscious, and creative.

In a socialist society, labor should no longer be performed under the compulsion of hunger, fear, or authority. It should become an act of self-expression and collective participation, guided by understanding and social purpose. Lenin, in his writings after the revolution, insisted that labor under socialism must be voluntary, disciplined by awareness, not by coercion. “We must create conditions,” he wrote, “in which work becomes not a burden, but the first necessity of life.” This transformation of labor was to be the deepest measure of the revolution’s success. Only when the worker is free — when he sees his work as his own — can the alienation of capitalism truly end.

North Korea’s system of forced labor represents the complete negation of this idea. Labor there is not an expression of freedom but a mechanism of control. It is imposed upon the people by the state, organized not according to social need but to bureaucratic command. The worker does not decide the purpose of his labor, nor share in its results. He labors because he must — because refusal would bring punishment, suspicion, or imprisonment. This compulsion extends far beyond the workplace. The state mobilizes the entire population for constant “voluntary labor campaigns,” where participation is compulsory in everything but name. Workers, students, soldiers, and even children are ordered to work extra hours, to build roads, harvest crops, or construct monuments to the leader.

These “mass mobilizations” are presented in official propaganda as expressions of revolutionary enthusiasm, but in reality they reproduce the same alienation that Marx denounced under capitalism. The individual has no voice in what is produced, how it is produced, or for what purpose. Labor is not creative, but ritualistic — a performance of loyalty to authority. The worker’s energy is expended not for collective benefit but for the glorification of the regime. The monuments that rise from these campaigns — giant statues, grandiose buildings, and military parades — stand as symbols not of collective creation but of collective submission.

The same principle governs the system of forced labor camps, where labor becomes pure coercion. Prisoners and political detainees, deprived of rights and dignity, are compelled to perform exhausting work under threat of violence or death. Their labor serves the state’s economy, producing goods that sustain the bureaucracy, yet they receive nothing in return but survival rations. In Marxist terms, this is exploitation in its rawest form — labor extracted through force, alienated not only from its product but from its very humanity. Such labor cannot create socialist consciousness; it can only destroy it.

Even outside the camps, coercion permeates daily life. Employment is assigned by the state, and changing one’s workplace is nearly impossible. Absence or lateness are treated as

political offenses. In rural areas, peasants are bound to collective farms where quotas are enforced regardless of conditions. The supposed “voluntary” work of the people is sustained by fear — fear of punishment, of denunciation, of exclusion from rations and privileges. In such a climate, labor becomes not a joy but a burden, not a source of pride but of exhaustion.

The moral damage of this system is immense. Under socialism, labor should educate, elevate, and unite. Under coercion, it degrades, dehumanizes, and divides. The worker who labors under compulsion cannot develop the consciousness that Marx and Lenin saw as the foundation of socialism. He learns not cooperation but obedience, not creativity but conformity. The more he works, the more alienated he becomes, for his labor produces not his freedom but the instruments of his domination.

Lenin emphasized that the transition to socialism would succeed only if the people themselves took charge of production, learning through participation to manage society. In North Korea, the opposite has occurred: the state monopolizes initiative, and the people are reduced to mechanical executors of orders. The bureaucracy speaks endlessly of “socialist labor,” but in truth it has recreated the essence of capitalist exploitation. The form has changed — there are no private owners — but the substance remains: labor is compelled, surplus is extracted, and the worker is powerless.

This system of forced labor also reveals the hypocrisy of the regime’s ideology. The leadership proclaims that all citizens are equal participants in the building of socialism, yet their labor is demanded through fear, not through understanding. In genuine Marxist practice, the worker becomes the measure of value and the creator of meaning. In North Korea, the worker becomes a tool — a living machine in service to the bureaucracy’s plan. The very activity that was to liberate humanity has been turned into its instrument of subjugation.

Therefore, forced labor in North Korea is not simply a violation of human rights; it is the complete negation of Marxist and Leninist thought. It transforms the highest ideal of socialism — free and creative labor — into its opposite. Where Marx envisioned the worker as a creator, North Korea produces a slave; where Lenin sought the conscious discipline of free producers, North Korea enforces blind obedience. The worker’s hands build monuments to his own subjugation, while his mind is trained to believe that he is free.

This contradiction lies at the heart of the regime’s false socialism. A society that forces its people to labor under threat cannot call itself socialist, for socialism begins when labor becomes voluntary — when work expresses freedom, not fear. Until the workers of Korea can once again labor as conscious creators, their society will remain not a community of free producers, but a prison built in the name of revolution.

To understand how North Korea maintains submission among its people, one must approach the problem through Lenin’s method of class analysis. Lenin taught that every social order, regardless of the slogans it uses, must be examined according to which class holds power and in whose interests the state functions. He warned that the forms of the state can change — monarchy, republic, even workers’ state — but its content is determined by the class that commands the means of production and the organs of coercion. By this measure, North

Korea's political structure reveals not the rule of the working class, but the domination of a bureaucratic caste that has replaced the bourgeoisie as the new exploiter.

In such a system, ideology and fear become the two primary tools of control. Ideology provides the justification for domination; fear enforces it. The ruling bureaucracy, having no legitimate claim to represent the workers, constructs a total belief system that identifies loyalty to itself with loyalty to socialism. It proclaims that the leader and the party are the "brains" and "heart" of the people, that obedience is the highest revolutionary virtue, and that criticism is betrayal. This ideology functions as a weapon to conceal class relations — to make exploitation appear as devotion, and servitude as collective harmony.

Marx and Lenin both understood ideology as a reflection of material conditions — a set of ideas that express the interests of a ruling class. In a classless society, ideology would disappear because consciousness would reflect reality directly. In North Korea, ideology serves precisely the opposite purpose: to distort reality and prevent consciousness from arising. The bureaucracy depends on this distortion to survive. Its privileges — superior housing, rations, education, and comfort — contradict the idea of socialist equality. To conceal this contradiction, it elevates the leader to divine status and portrays obedience as moral duty. The worker, instead of seeing his oppression as the result of class domination, is taught to see it as sacrifice for the fatherland.

Fear complements ideology by ensuring that even doubt remains unspoken. The state's surveillance network, the labor camps, and the practice of collective punishment create an atmosphere where silence is the only safety. The individual knows that a careless word or gesture can be interpreted as disloyalty, and that not only he but his family will suffer. This system of terror ensures that obedience becomes instinctive. Fear becomes the internal policeman, more efficient than any external force. It shapes behavior, suppresses thought, and transforms the population into a disciplined mass.

In Lenin's view, the revolution was to abolish the use of fear as a political weapon. He argued that socialism must rely on conviction and collective discipline, not on terror. The working class, he said, must learn to govern by understanding and cooperation. Violence, though necessary in the struggle against the old ruling class, had no place as a permanent method within the workers' state. The use of repression against the people themselves would mark the degeneration of the revolution into tyranny. North Korea demonstrates precisely this degeneration. Its rulers employ fear not to defend socialism, but to defend their own privileges.

The ideological structure of the regime expresses the material interests of this ruling caste. Its slogans — "single-hearted unity," "absolute loyalty," and "revolutionary devotion" — are not principles of socialism but instruments of class rule. They demand that the people renounce individuality, criticism, and initiative. In return, the bureaucracy offers symbolic participation: the illusion of belonging to a great collective purpose. This illusion is essential to the survival of the system, for it masks the fact that the people's labor sustains a hierarchy that excludes them. The worker who believes he is serving the revolution is less likely to question the inequality he endures.

Lenin's class analysis helps expose the true nature of this relationship. The North Korean bureaucracy constitutes a new exploiting class — not by private ownership, but by its monopoly of administration and information. It controls production, distribution, and ideology. It consumes a disproportionate share of the national product while demanding austerity from the masses. It lives in comfort while preaching sacrifice. This is not socialism, where the workers manage their collective resources, but state capitalism, where a bureaucratic minority appropriates the social surplus. The ideology of devotion to the leader serves to conceal this exploitation, transforming class domination into moral obligation.

Fear sustains this illusion by making open analysis impossible. The people cannot form independent organizations, cannot publish their thoughts, cannot even discuss their condition in private. Without communication, no collective awareness can develop. Each worker believes his suffering is personal, not social. The bureaucracy, understanding this, maintains isolation and secrecy as deliberate policy. Information is controlled so completely that the population knows little of the world beyond its borders and nothing of its own economy. Ignorance and fear thus reinforce each other: ignorance prevents understanding, and fear prevents questioning.

This combination of ideology and terror creates a self-perpetuating system. The bureaucracy rules not by open violence alone but by psychological submission. The worker obeys not only because he is afraid, but because he has been taught that obedience is virtue. The system functions precisely because it fuses material coercion with moral compulsion. The result is the complete inversion of socialism: a state that presents itself as the highest form of workers' power while resting upon their total subordination.

The Marxist method of analysis exposes this contradiction. The ruling caste, though it speaks in the name of the proletariat, is in reality its oppressor. Its interests are to preserve hierarchy, privilege, and control. Its ideology of loyalty and fear is not an expression of revolutionary consciousness but the defense of its own material position. North Korea thus reveals, in its most extreme form, the truth of Lenin's warning that without constant vigilance and democracy, the workers' state could degenerate into a dictatorship of officials over the people.

In the face of this reality, the task of genuine Marxism is to restore the principle of workers' self-activity — to reawaken the people's awareness that they are the creators of history, not its subjects. Only when fear is broken and ideology is exposed can the working class recover its collective strength. For as long as the bureaucracy's false consciousness prevails, the people remain prisoners of a system that uses the name of socialism to perpetuate exploitation.

Every society reveals its true class character not in its official proclamations but in the daily life of its people — in who enjoys comfort and who endures hardship, in who commands and who obeys, in who lives for work and who lives from it. North Korea, which calls itself a classless socialist society, conceals beneath its slogans a sharp and systematic inequality between the ruling bureaucracy and the working masses. The contradiction between the

wealth of the elite and the poverty of the people exposes the state's real nature: not a community of equals, but a hierarchically organized society ruled by privilege.

In Marxist analysis, inequality arises whenever one group monopolizes control over the means of production and distribution. Under capitalism, that group is the bourgeoisie; in North Korea, it is the bureaucratic elite. Though property is nominally owned by the people, in practice it is administered by officials whose position grants them material advantage. This bureaucracy consumes the social surplus produced by the workers while presenting itself as the guardian of socialism. Its members occupy the upper levels of the party, army, and state; they enjoy privileges of housing, food, medical care, education, and leisure that are entirely inaccessible to ordinary citizens.

The hierarchy is visible in every detail of life. In Pyongyang, the city reserved for the loyal and politically reliable, electricity is stable, food distribution is regular, and transportation is maintained. Outside the capital, in rural areas and provincial towns, shortages are constant and hunger is common. The elite dine in special restaurants supplied through closed distribution channels, while the people subsist on rations that often fail to meet minimal needs. The bureaucrat's children attend elite schools where they learn foreign languages and modern technology; the children of workers learn obedience and ideology. This material inequality, sustained through the state apparatus, reproduces the very class divisions Marxism sought to abolish.

Lenin warned that if the revolution failed to ensure equality between officials and workers, a new privileged class would inevitably arise. He insisted that state officials receive no higher wage than an average worker and that all positions be elective and recallable. North Korea's rulers have done precisely the opposite. Their privileges are permanent and hereditary; their positions are secured not by the people's will but by political loyalty. The bureaucracy lives as a closed caste, reproducing its own members through family connections and party patronage. The working class, excluded from decision-making and deprived of organization, has no means to challenge this inequality.

To preserve the illusion of equality, the regime relies on systematic falsification. Statistics are fabricated to present an image of prosperity and success. Reports of agricultural yields, industrial output, and living standards are inflated to prove the "superiority of the socialist system." These false numbers are repeated endlessly in official media, forming a world of fiction where poverty disappears in the language of achievement. In this falsified reality, the leader is praised for providing abundance while the people struggle for survival. The bureaucracy depends on this deception to maintain legitimacy, for truth would expose its parasitic existence.

The falsification extends beyond economic data to every sphere of public life. Newspapers and radio announce record harvests even in years of famine; they celebrate rising production even as factories stand idle. The people are told that they live in the most advanced and moral society on earth, even as they queue for food and fuel. This distortion is not mere propaganda; it is an integral part of the system of control. By monopolizing information, the state ensures that no independent consciousness can arise. If reality contradicts official

claims, it is reality that must be denied. The worker who complains of hunger is accused of lacking faith; the peasant who questions production figures is labeled an enemy. Truth becomes a political offense.

This falsification serves the same function as ideology and fear: it conceals exploitation. When statistics declare that production and welfare are rising, the suffering of the people becomes invisible. The bureaucracy can claim that sacrifices are temporary, that hardship is proof of revolutionary spirit. In this way, the worker's poverty is turned into moral virtue, and the bureaucrat's privilege into reward for loyalty. Marx called such distortion "false consciousness" — the inversion of truth that allows exploitation to appear as justice. In North Korea, false consciousness is not spontaneous but imposed, enforced by censorship and repetition until illusion replaces experience.

The material gap between rulers and ruled, however, cannot be hidden completely. The contrast between the luxury of the elite and the misery of the masses breeds silent resentment. The bureaucrats travel in imported cars and wear foreign suits, while workers patch their clothes and struggle to heat their homes. The elite feast during national holidays while peasants receive slogans instead of food. Yet even resentment is suppressed, for to speak of inequality is to question the moral foundation of the regime. The people are taught that their hardships are necessary for national defense and the leader's vision, and so silence becomes survival.

Lenin's vision of socialism as the "association of free and equal producers" has been inverted. The North Korean worker produces wealth he does not enjoy and lives in poverty he cannot protest. The bureaucratic elite consumes the surplus in comfort, protected by ideology and force. This is exploitation in the precise Marxist sense: the appropriation of unpaid labor by a ruling class. The only difference is that the exploiters wear red badges instead of owning factories. The economic relation remains the same — a minority lives from the labor of the majority.

The falsification of statistics completes this exploitation by erasing its visibility. It allows the bureaucracy to maintain its image as the guardian of the revolution while it drains the substance of socialism from society. The result is a hollow structure — socialist in words, feudal in spirit, capitalist in essence. Behind the façade of equality lies the same ancient reality: rulers and subjects, privilege and want, command and obedience.

In this system, truth itself becomes a revolutionary act. To speak honestly about hunger or inequality is to challenge the very foundation of bureaucratic rule. Yet until truth is restored, until the people see their condition as it is, no transformation is possible. For as Marx wrote, "The criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of earth." To expose falsehood is the first step toward liberation. North Korea's falsified equality must therefore be seen for what it is — the mask of exploitation under the banner of socialism.

In Marxist-Leninist understanding, socialism begins when the working class becomes the conscious ruler of society — when those who labor also govern, plan, and decide the direction of social life. The proletariat ceases to be an object of exploitation and becomes the

subject of history. This transformation was the very heart of the Marxist idea: the disappearance of domination, the self-government of free producers, and the creation of a classless community. Yet in North Korea, this promise has been reversed. The people, who should have been the rulers, have become the ruled. They live not as free citizens of a workers' republic, but as subjects of a bureaucratic autocracy disguised as socialism.

The structure of North Korean society reveals this inversion clearly. All power is concentrated in the hands of the ruling elite — the leadership family, the upper party hierarchy, and the military command. The workers, peasants, and soldiers are presented in official propaganda as the masters of the state, yet they have no power over their workplaces, their unions, or their communities. Every organization that claims to represent them — the trade unions, the youth league, the women's federation — functions as an instrument of surveillance and discipline. The people's assemblies meet only to applaud pre-decided policies. Elections are held without choice, votes without alternatives. The state proclaims the sovereignty of the people while ensuring that they never exercise it.

This is the defining contradiction of North Korea's system: the language of socialism conceals the substance of servitude. The worker is told that he is the master of society, yet he cannot move, speak, or think freely. He is told that his labor builds the future, yet he has no say in how it is used. He is told that he lives in a classless society, yet he sees luxury for the few and scarcity for the many. In this way, ideology transforms oppression into illusion, and illusion into obedience. The people do not rule because the means of ruling — information, organization, and power — have been monopolized by the bureaucracy.

Lenin warned that if the organs of workers' power — the soviets, the councils, and the unions — were replaced by bureaucratic administration, the revolution would lose its soul. He argued that socialism without workers' democracy was an impossibility. In North Korea, this warning has been fulfilled. The soviet idea of direct workers' control never existed there. Instead, the state created a pyramid of command where each level answers only to the one above it, culminating in the absolute authority of the leader. The people, stripped of participation, remain at the base of this structure — not as decision-makers, but as instruments of execution.

The bureaucratic autocracy that governs North Korea is thus not an accidental distortion of socialism but its negation. The state, which under Lenin was to be a temporary tool of workers' self-organization, has become a permanent mechanism of control. It commands production, thought, and life itself. Its purpose is not to disappear, but to preserve its own existence. The bureaucracy rules in the name of the workers while keeping them powerless, just as the bourgeoisie once ruled in the name of freedom while maintaining exploitation. The forms have changed, but the social relation — ruler and ruled — remains.

This system is sustained by a fusion of coercion and ideology. Fear prevents rebellion; belief prevents recognition. The people obey not only because they are threatened, but because they have been taught to identify obedience with virtue. The cult of the leader transforms submission into faith. The worker's exhaustion becomes proof of loyalty; his silence, proof of

wisdom. The more he suffers, the more he is told he is free. Such is the perfection of bureaucratic rule: the transformation of oppression into devotion.

Marx's conception of communism — the free association of producers — has been turned inside out. North Korea is not a society of free and equal workers but a rigid hierarchy in which authority descends from above and obedience rises from below. The people, deprived of initiative, function as instruments in a system that serves the bureaucracy's interests. They produce wealth they do not control, repeat words they do not believe, and live lives shaped by decisions they did not make. The dictatorship of the proletariat has become the dictatorship *over* the proletariat — the same historical tragedy that befell Stalinism in the Soviet Union, now frozen in its purest form.

Thus, the condition of the people in North Korea can be summed up in one truth: they are not the rulers, but the ruled. They do not exercise power; they endure it. They do not govern the state; they are governed by it. Their labor, their obedience, and their silence sustain a regime that speaks in their name while denying their humanity. The bureaucratic autocracy that calls itself socialist is in fact the opposite of socialism — a system in which the people have been separated from power, from truth, and from themselves.

In Marxist terms, such a state is not the culmination of revolution but its betrayal. It preserves the forms of socialism while restoring the substance of class domination. The red flags, the slogans, and the songs of unity conceal a structure of exploitation and fear. The worker, the peasant, and the soldier are praised as heroes of the revolution, yet they remain its prisoners. True socialism — the self-liberation of humanity through collective power — cannot exist where the people are forbidden to act as subjects of history.

The liberation of the Korean people, therefore, can only begin when they reclaim the power that was taken from them — when they transform obedience into thought, fear into solidarity, and labor into creation. Only when the people themselves rise to rule, as Marx and Lenin envisioned, will socialism cease to be a mask for domination and become again the living movement toward human freedom.

## Superstructure, Class Relations, and the State Form

To conduct a scientific critique of North Korea's political and social system, one must employ the categories developed by Marx and Lenin for the analysis of any social formation: the economic base, the ideological and political superstructure, the class relations that arise from them, and the form of the state that corresponds to these relations. These categories reveal not merely appearances but the material foundations of society — the relations of production that determine the nature of its institutions, its ideas, and its power. Applying this method to North Korea exposes its essence: a state-capitalist and bureaucratic order cloaked in the symbols of socialism, in which a new ruling class has arisen to dominate the working people.

Marx defined the economic base as the totality of production relations that form the real structure of society. These relations, not the proclamations of ideology, determine the character of the state and the consciousness of the people. In a socialist society, the base should consist of social ownership of the means of production combined with collective control by the workers themselves. Labor should be free and creative, and production organized according to social need rather than profit or compulsion. In North Korea, however, the real relations of production are characterized not by social ownership but by bureaucratic control. The means of production belong formally to the state, but the state is not the people's instrument — it is the property of a ruling caste that monopolizes decision-making. The worker does not command his labor; he serves it. He remains separated from the means of production, and his surplus labor is appropriated by the bureaucracy through state command.

Thus, the economic base of North Korea is not socialist but state-capitalist. The state functions as the collective capitalist, extracting surplus value in the form of labor quotas, unpaid overtime, and coerced mobilizations. The working class receives rations or low wages that sustain only bare existence, while the bureaucratic stratum consumes the surplus through privileges, special distribution, and control of foreign trade. This relation reproduces the fundamental structure of class society: a minority that directs and benefits, and a majority that obeys and produces. The economic base, therefore, establishes a class division not between private owners and workers, but between administrators and producers — between those who command and those who labor.

From this base arises the superstructure — the political, legal, and ideological institutions that protect and justify the existing relations of production. In Marxist terms, the superstructure functions to stabilize the base, reproducing the conditions of domination through the state, the party, and ideology. In North Korea, the superstructure has been constructed precisely to preserve bureaucratic power. The political system — centered on the Workers' Party and the hereditary leadership — serves to ensure the obedience of the masses and the continuity of privilege. The legal system enforces not justice but loyalty; the educational system teaches not knowledge but worship; the media transmits not truth but propaganda. The entire superstructure is designed to suppress independent consciousness and to prevent the emergence of collective power from below.

Within this superstructure operates an elaborate ideological apparatus that sanctifies the existing order. The cult of the leader, the ideology of Juche, and the rhetoric of "self-reliance" all function as ideological justifications for bureaucratic rule. Juche claims that the people are the masters of the revolution, but in practice it proclaims that only the leader can embody their will. It transforms the alienation of the masses into a spiritual bond with authority, replacing material understanding with faith. Thus, ideology becomes a direct instrument of class domination — not a reflection of collective consciousness, but a weapon against it.

The class relations that result from this base and superstructure are clear. At the top stands the bureaucratic class — the party leadership, senior military officers, and high officials — who control access to resources, information, and privilege. Below them are the broad layers of

workers, peasants, and soldiers who perform the labor that sustains the state but have no voice in its direction. Between these groups exists a rigid hierarchy reinforced by political loyalty and surveillance. Mobility between classes is nearly impossible, for birth and background determine one's social position. This structure reproduces class domination in a new form, replacing capitalist property with bureaucratic control, but preserving exploitation as the extraction of surplus labor from the masses.

Lenin's theory of the state provides the key to understanding this structure. In State and Revolution, he defined the state as an instrument of class rule — "a special organization of force for the suppression of one class by another." Under socialism, this instrument was to be transformed into a tool of the working class, used temporarily to suppress the resistance of the exploiters, and then to disappear as classes themselves disappeared. The North Korean state has taken the opposite path. It has become an instrument for the suppression of the working class by the bureaucracy. Its permanence, its militarization, and its cult of leadership all demonstrate that it serves not as a means to liberation but as an end in itself. Instead of disappearing, the state has expanded until it dominates every aspect of life.

This transformation reveals the anti-Leninist nature of the North Korean system. Where Lenin sought the disappearance of coercion, North Korea has institutionalized coercion. Where he envisioned a workers' state based on soviets and recallable delegates, North Korea has created an autocracy centered on hereditary leadership. Where Lenin demanded equality among all officials and workers, the North Korean state enforces privilege and hierarchy. The state that should have been the servant of the people has become their master — the ultimate capitalist in bureaucratic form.

Therefore, when examined through the categories of Marx and Lenin — base, superstructure, class relations, and state form — North Korea reveals its true essence. Its economic base reproduces alienated labor; its superstructure sanctifies domination; its class relations perpetuate inequality; and its state form embodies the dictatorship of a bureaucratic class. The system calls itself socialist, but its material structure is the negation of socialism. It is a society in which the words of Marx and Lenin are recited, but their thought is inverted — a state where the people labor for their rulers under the banner of their own emancipation.

The decisive proof that North Korea's system has ceased to be socialist lies in the emergence of a new ruling class — a bureaucratic stratum composed of high-ranking party administrators, military officers, and state managers. Though it claims to serve the people, this stratum commands them; though it speaks in the name of socialism, it lives in conditions of privilege built on inequality and coercion. What Marx called the *ruling class* — those who control the means of production and the political power that protects them — has reappeared in North Korea under new forms. The bourgeoisie has been replaced not by the self-governing proletariat but by a collective bureaucracy that exercises ownership through the state apparatus.

In the Marxist conception, every ruling class justifies its domination by presenting its own interests as the common good. Under capitalism, the bourgeoisie proclaimed "freedom" and "progress" while maintaining exploitation; under North Korea's bureaucracy, the ruling caste

proclaims “socialism” and “unity” while maintaining control and privilege. The essence of class power, however, remains the same: the concentration of decision-making and surplus in the hands of a minority. The North Korean bureaucracy monopolizes all economic and political authority. It alone determines production targets, distribution, and policy; it alone has access to real information; and it alone enjoys security, comfort, and influence.

At the summit of this class structure stands the hereditary leadership, whose authority sanctifies the entire system. Around it functions a network of senior party cadres, military officers, and intelligence officials who administer the state’s machinery of power. Beneath them lies a second layer of regional and local officials who ensure the transmission of orders and the enforcement of loyalty. Their positions are maintained by political reliability and family background, not by skill or service. The people, stripped of any means to influence or replace their rulers, exist as passive subjects. The bureaucracy thus forms a self-reproducing caste, reproducing its own power through control of resources and ideology — precisely the condition Marx and Lenin identified as class domination.

Lenin foresaw this danger with remarkable clarity. In *State and Revolution* and later writings, he warned that even after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the old habits of bureaucracy could survive and grow within the new state. He wrote that the proletarian state must “immediately begin to die away,” for if it did not, a new privileged class of officials would arise, turning the workers’ power into its opposite. To prevent this, Lenin demanded the strictest measures of accountability: all officials were to be elected, recallable at any time, paid no more than the average worker, and subject to constant control from below. He knew that if the state ceased to be transparent and temporary, it would transform itself from an instrument of liberation into an organ of oppression.

North Korea represents the complete realization of the danger Lenin described. The state there has not disappeared; it has absorbed society. Instead of being administered by the working class, it is administered over the working class. Its officials are not recallable, not equal in pay, and not subject to criticism. They form a separate layer whose material interests are opposed to those of the masses. Lenin’s warning that “the state will become a force above society” has been fulfilled to the letter. The bureaucracy, once justified as the necessary organizer of the revolution, has become its master.

The military has played a crucial role in this transformation. In Marxist theory, the army under socialism should be a people’s militia, composed of citizens defending their collective achievements. In North Korea, the army has been transformed into a privileged institution — both guardian and beneficiary of bureaucratic rule. Its top officers enjoy material advantages similar to those of senior party officials, and its loyalty ensures the dynasty’s survival. The *Songun* (“military-first”) policy elevated the armed forces to the position of ultimate arbiter of state power, turning them into a pillar of the ruling class. The military’s privileges — priority in food, housing, and resources — depend upon the perpetuation of the existing system. In this way, the army, which should have been an instrument of the people, has become an instrument of class preservation.

The party bureaucracy and the military elite together constitute what Lenin would have recognized as the *new bourgeoisie*: a class that does not own factories or land individually, but collectively controls them through the state. This class extracts surplus labor from the working people not through market mechanisms but through political command. Its ideology, wrapped in socialist phrases, conceals its material interests. Its power depends on maintaining ignorance, obedience, and isolation among the masses. The result is a form of state capitalism where the bureaucratic class plays the same role that capitalists once did — appropriating surplus, directing production, and enjoying privilege — while the workers remain alienated from both their labor and their state.

In *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*, Lenin emphasized that socialism could not be built through orders from above. He insisted that only through the participation of millions in administration could the revolution remain alive. Bureaucracy, he said, "arises where the masses are passive." In North Korea, the people's passivity has been enforced by fear and ideology. The bureaucracy, freed from control and criticism, has consolidated itself as a distinct social group with its own material interests. Its functionaries speak of serving the people while living apart from them, isolated by privilege and guarded by power.

The tragedy of North Korea lies in this fulfillment of Lenin's most serious warning. What was meant to be a transitional apparatus — a state that would guide society toward freedom — has hardened into a permanent structure of domination. The bureaucracy has transformed itself from a servant of socialism into a ruling class hostile to it. Its privileges are sustained not by ownership deeds, but by the political monopoly of the state and the ideological monopoly of the party. The worker and peasant, whose labor builds the nation, have no control over what they build.

Thus, through Lenin's own categories, we see that North Korea has recreated the very social division Marxism sought to abolish. Bureaucrats, generals, and administrators occupy the position of exploiters; the people, the position of the exploited. The state, instead of preparing for its disappearance, has entrenched itself as the guardian of privilege. The bureaucracy's survival depends on maintaining this inequality — a truth it conceals behind slogans of unity and socialism. In this sense, the system is not a continuation of Lenin's revolution but its opposite: the triumph of the bureaucratic caste that Lenin warned against, now ruling in his name.

The ideology of *Juche*, officially proclaimed as the guiding principle of North Korea, presents itself as the continuation and creative development of Marxism-Leninism. In truth, it is a nationalist deviation that rejects the international and scientific foundation of communism. It replaces class analysis with national mythology, international solidarity with isolation, and the collective struggle of workers with the self-reliance of a single state. What Marx and Lenin conceived as a universal movement of humanity toward liberation has in North Korea been reduced to a narrow doctrine serving the interests of a bureaucratic nation-state.

Marxism was born as an international theory. Marx and Engels declared in the *Communist Manifesto* that "the workers have no country" and that the emancipation of the working class

must be a global process, for capitalism itself is a global system. They understood that the liberation of labor could not be achieved within national boundaries, since the exploitation of the worker is sustained by the world market and the competition between nations. Communism, for Marx, was the end of national antagonisms — the uniting of humanity in a classless community.

Lenin, developing this thought in the age of imperialism, emphasized that socialism could not survive in isolation. He saw the Russian Revolution as the beginning of a world process, inseparable from the struggles of workers and oppressed peoples everywhere. The slogan "Workers of the world, unite!" was not rhetoric but scientific necessity. For Lenin, proletarian internationalism was the condition of socialism's victory and its guarantee against degeneration. Without it, the revolution would turn inward, become national, and decay into bureaucracy.

*Juche* represents precisely this decay. Its central claim is that the people must rely solely on their own strength and that the nation is the supreme subject of history. This idea replaces the working class — the central actor in Marxist theory — with an abstract "people" defined by national identity and loyalty to the leader. It substitutes the struggle between classes with the unity of all social groups under the banner of national self-reliance. In doing so, it denies the very existence of class contradictions within the country and sanctifies the ruling bureaucracy as the embodiment of the nation.

This nationalist reinterpretation of socialism serves a political function. It allows the North Korean regime to justify its isolation from the world communist movement, to suppress internal dissent, and to disguise class rule as patriotic duty. By proclaiming *Juche*, the bureaucracy asserts that the leader, not the people, is the source of wisdom; that the nation, not the class, is the subject of history; and that obedience, not criticism, is the highest form of revolutionary virtue. The doctrine of *self-reliance* thus masks the reality of dependence — dependence on the labor of the people and on the coercive apparatus that sustains bureaucratic privilege.

Lenin warned against precisely this kind of nationalist deviation. In his writings on the national question, he affirmed the right of nations to self-determination but insisted that nationalism must never replace proletarian internationalism. The aim of communists, he said, is not to strengthen national isolation but to unite workers across borders against all ruling classes. He wrote that "the workers' fatherland is where labor is free." In North Korea, labor is not free, and the "fatherland" has become the property of the bureaucracy. The national flag has replaced the red flag of international struggle; the unity of the Korean people has replaced the unity of the working class.

The ideological shift from class to nation has profound consequences. Under Marxism, solidarity is built through shared struggle against exploitation; under *Juche*, solidarity is defined by loyalty to the state. The worker is not a member of a global class but a soldier of the nation. Internationalism, which demands exchange and mutual aid among workers of all countries, is denounced as weakness or foreign influence. The result is a reversal of Marx's

principle: the world is no longer seen as the field of collective human liberation, but as a threat to the nation's purity and independence.

This nationalist isolation has deepened the bureaucratic degeneration of the North Korean state. By cutting itself off from international criticism and cooperation, the regime has ensured that no external perspective can challenge its ideology. The world revolution has been replaced by the perpetual revolution of loyalty to the leader. The isolation that *Juche* celebrates as self-reliance is in reality self-imprisonment. The people are told they are free because they depend on no one, but their "freedom" is the absence of solidarity, the confinement of a nation within its own dogma.

Marx and Lenin saw the revolution as a global process uniting all oppressed people against exploitation. North Korea's *Juche* turns this unity into its opposite — a barrier that separates one nation from humanity. It destroys the international character of communism, replacing it with national worship and racial mythology. The revolutionary idea of humanity's collective emancipation is narrowed into a closed circle of obedience to the national state.

The adoption of *Juche* thus marks the complete ideological transformation of Marxism in North Korea. It no longer serves as a science of liberation but as a theology of rule. Where Marx called for the unity of workers across borders, *Juche* demands their isolation behind borders. Where Lenin saw the state as a temporary instrument of class struggle, *Juche* sanctifies the state as eternal. Where Marxism sought the disappearance of nations through universal emancipation, *Juche* glorifies nationalism as the highest moral value.

In its essence, *Juche* is not socialism at all, but a form of bureaucratic nationalism — an ideology that replaces class with nation, international solidarity with autarky, and revolution with obedience. It represents the triumph of the state over the people and of ideology over truth. Under its banner, Marxism has been emptied of its content, and the dream of global human freedom has been reduced to the service of a single family and its apparatus of power.

Thus, in Marxist-Leninist terms, *Juche* stands not as the development of communism, but as its betrayal. It abandons the international spirit that animated Marx and Lenin, replacing the unity of the world's workers with the self-worship of a nation ruled by a bureaucracy. It is the final ideological mask of a system that calls itself socialist but in reality embodies the old enemy — the separation of rulers and ruled, of thought and labor, of humanity divided once more by borders, hierarchy, and fear.

The ideology of North Korea claims to rest upon Marxism-Leninism, but in reality, it represents its complete falsification. The scientific method of dialectical materialism — the foundation of Marx's and Lenin's thought — has been replaced by a system of dogmas and personality cult slogans. What was once a method of analysis and transformation has been converted into an instrument of worship and control. Instead of teaching the working people to think critically about their material conditions, North Korean propaganda instructs them to memorize, repeat, and venerate the leader's words as unquestionable truth.

Dialectical materialism, as developed by Marx and Engels and practiced by Lenin, is not a static doctrine. It is the method by which human society understands itself through the study of material conditions, contradictions, and historical development. Marx emphasized that truth is not handed down by authority but discovered through collective practice — through the living struggle of the working class to understand and change the world. Lenin called this process the "concrete analysis of concrete conditions." He warned that without dialectical thought, Marxism would degenerate into empty formulas, severed from reality.

In North Korea, this degeneration has occurred completely. Dialectics — the study of contradiction, development, and the unity of opposites — has been abolished as a method of thought. The contradictions of society, which Marxism seeks to expose and resolve through class struggle, are denied entirely. The official ideology proclaims that under the guidance of the leader, all contradictions have been solved, and that the nation exists in perfect harmony between people and state. By erasing contradiction, the regime erases the very possibility of change, for in dialectical understanding, contradiction is the source of movement and progress. The result is ideological paralysis — a doctrine that cannot learn, cannot adapt, and cannot confront reality.

The language of North Korean propaganda illustrates this falsification vividly. The core of all teaching and writing is not the study of economic laws or social relations, but the glorification of the leader's genius. Every political or historical question is answered by citing the leader's words. Marx's materialist conception of history, which explains social change through the development of productive forces and class struggle, is replaced by the myth of the leader's infallible guidance. The people are told that every advance in science, culture, and industry is the result of his wisdom and benevolence. Thus, history becomes not the product of collective labor, but the biography of one family.

The method of propaganda confirms this shift from science to worship. Textbooks, films, and newspapers do not analyze reality; they describe it as already perfect. The leader is credited with solving every theoretical question. His thought is said to be the "highest stage of human understanding." Even the categories of Marxism — class, labor, value, production — are interpreted through references to his personality. The result is the transformation of theory into mythology. What was once a revolutionary science has been turned into a sacred text.

This falsification destroys the critical and self-correcting nature of Marxist thought. Marxism, as Lenin emphasized, advances through struggle — through the clash of ideas, through criticism and self-criticism. It cannot exist without freedom of debate and investigation. In North Korea, such freedom is forbidden. The study of theory has been replaced by ritual. Students memorize passages from *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* as if they were religious verses. The purpose is not to understand, but to affirm; not to question, but to obey. The result is the total separation of thought from reality — the very opposite of materialism.

Dialectical materialism teaches that ideas arise from material conditions and must change as conditions change. North Korean ideology reverses this relation: material conditions are said to arise from ideas — specifically, from the will of the leader. The people are told that their prosperity depends not on their labor or organization but on their faith and loyalty. This is the

idealist inversion of Marxism: it turns a scientific method into a religious doctrine. The leader's thought becomes a supernatural force that shapes history independently of material forces. Such a worldview serves only to justify the existing hierarchy, for if all progress comes from above, then the people's role is merely to follow.

This falsification extends into historical writing. The revolutionary struggle in Korea is depicted not as a collective movement of workers and peasants, but as a personal saga of Kim Il Sung. His actions are portrayed as decisive in every event, while the role of the masses is reduced to applause. Lenin's principle that "the revolution is made by the masses" is inverted: the revolution is said to have been made by the leader, with the people as instruments of his will. This cultic distortion removes history from the hands of the people and places it entirely in the hands of authority.

Lenin warned that such a transformation would mark the death of Marxism. He wrote that when a revolutionary doctrine becomes a state ideology, it risks being "castrated," turned from a weapon of criticism into a justification of power. North Korea demonstrates this fate perfectly. Marxism, once a call to overthrow oppression, now serves to sanctify it. The dialectic, once the method of liberation, now defends the immobility of tyranny. The word "socialism" has become a symbol not of freedom but of obedience.

In place of dialectical materialism, North Korean propaganda offers endless slogans: "The leader is the sun of the nation," "The people live by his grace," "One heart, one mind, one leader." These phrases, repeated constantly, are designed to eliminate thought itself. They are not arguments but incantations. They replace the analysis of reality with the affirmation of power. The population learns to repeat rather than to reflect, to believe rather than to know. Thus, the worker, who under Marxism should be the most conscious being, becomes the most conditioned.

The falsification of Marxist theory in North Korea is therefore not an intellectual mistake but a political necessity of the ruling class. The bureaucracy cannot tolerate dialectical thought because dialectics exposes contradiction, and contradiction reveals exploitation. To preserve its privilege, the bureaucracy destroys the method that could reveal it. The cult of the leader becomes the substitute for science, and propaganda becomes the substitute for truth. The ideology that once armed the oppressed now chains them to obedience.

In conclusion, North Korean propaganda has annihilated the substance of Marxist theory by turning it into a tool of domination. Dialectical materialism — the science of liberation — has been replaced by the theology of authority. The living method of Marx and Lenin, which sought to awaken consciousness, has been petrified into the lifeless repetition of slogans. The cult of personality stands where critical reason once stood; blind belief stands where knowledge once grew. Thus, the falsification of Marxism completes the transformation of socialism into its opposite — a system where the people no longer think, but worship; no longer act, but obey.

When examined through the categories of Marx and Lenin — the base and superstructure, the class relations, and the form of the state — North Korea stands exposed as the opposite of

socialism. It presents the external appearance of a workers' republic: red flags, revolutionary songs, slogans of equality and labor. Yet beneath these symbols lies a structure of domination, exploitation, and fear. The content of Marxism has been stripped away, leaving only its form, emptied of meaning and repurposed to defend a bureaucratic despotism. North Korea is not a socialist state but a Stalinistic system, covered in red banners yet hostile to the ideas those banners once represented.

Socialism, in the thought of Marx and Lenin, was to be the self-rule of the working class — the disappearance of class divisions through the socialization of property and the conscious organization of production by free and equal producers. The state, born as a weapon in the class struggle, was to be temporary, destined to disappear as the people took administration into their own hands. Political power was to return to society itself, making possible the end of coercion and hierarchy. The goal was not a new ruling class but the abolition of all ruling classes.

In North Korea, this process has been reversed. The state has not disappeared but become permanent; the working class has not become free but remains subordinate; production is not organized by the people but commanded by the bureaucracy. The workers, who should be the subjects of history, have been reduced to its objects. Their labor is expropriated by the state in the name of socialism, yet the product of that labor serves the comfort and security of the ruling caste. The revolution, which was meant to liberate, has been transformed into an apparatus of control.

This structure is the direct inheritance of **Stalinism** — the historical corruption of Marxism that began with the rise of the bureaucratic dictatorship in the Soviet Union. Stalinism replaced the dictatorship of the proletariat with the dictatorship of the party bureaucracy, substituted obedience for participation, and turned revolutionary theory into dogma. North Korea took this Stalinistic model to its extreme, combining it with dynastic succession and nationalist mythology. The result is a hybrid of bureaucratic state capitalism and feudal despotism, concealed behind the language of socialism.

The features of this system correspond in every detail to the Stalinistic type:
– **Centralization of power** in a single leader who personifies the state and party.
– **Suppression of soviet democracy** and of workers' organs of self-rule.
– **Bureaucratic privilege** sustained by ideological manipulation and fear.
– **Militarization of society** and glorification of the state as eternal.
– **Substitution of ideology for science**, and worship of authority in place of dialectical thought.

Each of these elements negates the essence of Marxism. Where Marx and Lenin taught that freedom is the aim of socialism, Stalinism demands submission. Where they called for the awakening of critical consciousness, Stalinism imposes blind faith. Where Marx foresaw the disappearance of the state, Stalinism multiplies its prisons, its armies, and its bureaucrats. The state ceases to be the instrument of the working class and becomes its master — a power ruling over the people in their own name.

In North Korea, the cult of the leader and the permanent militarization of society are not accidents; they are necessities of this system. Because the bureaucracy cannot justify itself through genuine social progress, it must justify itself through mythology. The people are taught that their suffering is proof of devotion, that isolation is proof of purity, that poverty is proof of revolutionary virtue. The slogans of socialism become the chains of submission. The red banner that once symbolized liberation now conceals enslavement.

Lenin foresaw that if the working class ceased to exercise direct control, the revolution would be betrayed by those who claimed to guard it. His fear has come true in North Korea, where the guardians of the revolution have become its grave-diggers. The bureaucracy, once a temporary instrument, has hardened into a permanent ruling class. Its power rests not on the participation of the people but on their obedience. It does not educate, it indoctrinates; it does not serve, it commands. Its existence depends on the preservation of ignorance and fear.

Therefore, to call North Korea a socialist state is to falsify Marx and Lenin alike. It is not socialism when the worker is forced to labor under surveillance. It is not socialism when truth is forbidden and the leader's word replaces reality. It is not socialism when a privileged caste consumes the wealth created by the many. Socialism without freedom, equality, and collective control is not socialism at all — it is despotism. The red banners, the statues, the slogans, and the hymns cannot change this truth: the people of North Korea do not rule; they are ruled.

The historical task of Marxism is to expose such falsifications. Marxism is not a ritual of words but a science of emancipation; not a faith in authority but a movement of liberation. To defend Marxism is to separate it from its distortions, to affirm that socialism cannot coexist with coercion, hierarchy, or worship of leaders. The socialist revolution is not the elevation of one man, one family, or one state — it is the awakening of humanity.

North Korea, beneath its red banners, stands as the opposite of this awakening. It is a Stalinistic despotism — a political religion of obedience built upon the ruins of Marx's and Lenin's ideas. Its survival depends on the very alienation that socialism was meant to abolish. The working class, whose name the regime invokes, remains enslaved by the power that claims to act in its interest. The true heirs of Marx and Lenin are not those who rule from palaces, but those who will one day tear down the idols and restore the revolution to its rightful owners — the workers themselves.

## Lessons from the North Korean Deviation

The tragedy of North Korea cannot be understood as a mere accident of leadership or a deviation born of personal ambition. It is the product of definite historical and structural conditions that allowed Stalinism to take root on Korean soil and to evolve into its most rigid and isolated form. From the beginning, the North Korean revolution developed not as a continuation of Marx's and Lenin's living thought, but as an imitation of the Soviet bureaucratic model that had already betrayed those ideas. The outcome — a hereditary

despotism covered in the symbols of socialism — was prepared by the very circumstances in which the revolution arose and the global forces that shaped it.

Korea emerged from decades of Japanese imperial domination impoverished, divided, and traumatized. The destruction of the national economy, the suppression of workers' organizations, and the annihilation of the left by colonial repression left no independent proletarian movement capable of leading a socialist transformation. When liberation came in 1945, it was not the result of a domestic uprising but of Japan's defeat in the world war and the advance of foreign armies. In the North, Soviet troops occupied the territory and immediately began organizing a government along the lines of their own Stalinistic system. This external imposition, rather than a spontaneous creation of the Korean working class, determined the state's bureaucratic form from its inception.

Instead of soviets of workers and peasants, a provisional administration was established under Soviet supervision, with Kim Il Sung — a partisan fighter loyal to the Stalinist model — at its head. The institutions that developed under his rule were not organs of workers' power, but organs of control. The Communist Party, renamed the Workers' Party, was modeled on the Stalinistic conception of the "monolithic party": centralized, hierarchical, and subordinate to a single leader. The people were excluded from decision-making from the very beginning. In this, North Korea inherited the Soviet Union's bureaucratic degeneration rather than Lenin's revolutionary democracy.

The division of the Korean peninsula after 1945 deepened these tendencies. Surrounded by hostile capitalist powers and cut off from the revolutionary movements of Asia and the world, the North Korean leadership turned inward. The isolation of the state was presented as virtue — "self-reliance" — but in fact it was necessity: the bureaucracy could maintain its power only by sealing the population off from foreign ideas and international solidarity. The permanent militarization of the country, justified by the threat from the South and the United States, reinforced authoritarian structures. The revolution that should have been international became national; the state that should have begun to disappear became absolute.

The Korean War (1950–1953) completed this transformation. The devastation of war and the constant threat of invasion created conditions in which dissent could be branded as treason. Under the banner of national defense, all political opposition was eliminated. The party was purged of independent thinkers and veterans of foreign communist movements. The leadership of Kim Il Sung consolidated its position by presenting itself as the embodiment of the nation's survival. From this point onward, the fusion of party, state, and leader became irreversible. The cult of personality, which in Lenin's thought was an abomination, was elevated to the highest principle of political life.

Structurally, the roots of North Korea's Stalinism lay in the weakness of its social base. The working class was small, the peasantry unorganized, and the intellectuals subordinated. The absence of independent workers' councils or peasant committees meant that the state could construct "socialism" from above, without the self-activity of the masses. The bureaucracy filled the vacuum left by the absence of popular power. It managed production, distribution, and ideology, claiming to act in the name of the people while excluding them from all

decisions. The result was a state that embodied not proletarian democracy but bureaucratic paternalism — rule by officials rather than by workers.

Internationally, the fate of North Korea was tied to the broader degeneration of the world communist movement after Stalin. The isolation of the Soviet model, the suppression of criticism, and the identification of socialism with state power created a pattern repeated in many countries — but nowhere with such totality as in Korea. The collapse of internationalist ties after the Sino-Soviet split further deepened North Korea's isolation. Caught between rival powers, the regime justified its independence by proclaiming *Juche*, a doctrine that transformed national isolation into an ideology. What began as a response to external pressure hardened into a permanent principle of internal control.

Thus, the emergence of North Korean Stalinism was not the product of Korean character or geography but of the global failure of socialism to maintain its democratic and international essence. The bureaucratic structure of the Soviet Union, the pressures of imperialism, and the division of the world into hostile blocs all contributed to the creation of a state where socialism was proclaimed without the social relations that define it. Under these conditions, Lenin's idea of workers' power could not survive. The people, lacking organs of self-government, were transformed from subjects of revolution into instruments of a state that claimed to act for them.

In sum, the historical and structural causes of North Korea's Stalinism can be traced to four interrelated factors: The external imposition of the Soviet model rather than the organic growth of workers' democracy. The absence of independent class organization, leaving the bureaucracy free to rule in the name of the people. The militarization and isolation created by division and war, turning the state into a permanent apparatus of defense and control. The global degeneration of socialism under Stalinism, which transformed Marxism from a theory of liberation into an ideology of state power.

These conditions combined to produce a system that bears the outer form of communism but its inner content is the opposite: hierarchy, coercion, and obedience. The North Korean state is the result not of Marxist evolution but of historical distortion — the crystallization of a bureaucracy that mistook the preservation of its own power for the construction of socialism.

To understand what North Korea abandoned, one must return to what Lenin actually meant by the term *communism*. For Lenin, as for Marx, communism was not merely a new form of government or ownership; it was the total transformation of human relations — the end of exploitation, domination, and alienation. It was the realization of human freedom through collective participation in the creation of social life. The communist society envisioned by Marx and Lenin is not one ruled by an all-powerful state, but one where the state disappears as an instrument of coercion because the people themselves consciously administer their affairs.

Lenin's vision of communism begins with the rule of the **soviets**, the councils of workers, peasants, and soldiers that arose during the Russian Revolution. The soviets were not bureaucratic organs but living expressions of the self-organization of the working class. They

represented a new form of democracy, direct and participatory, where every worker had both the right and the duty to take part in governance. Lenin saw in the soviets the embryo of a new state — not a state in the traditional sense, but an association of producers, flexible and temporary, designed to organize the transition from capitalism to communism.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, in Lenin's thought, did not mean the dictatorship of a party or leader over the workers, but the rule of the workers themselves — the organized majority suppressing the resistance of the old exploiters and creating the conditions for freedom. This dictatorship was to be exercised through the soviets, where representatives were elected, recallable at any time, and paid the same as the average worker. Lenin insisted that bureaucracy, privilege, and command must be eliminated as quickly as possible. The revolutionary state was to be an instrument for its own disappearance, not a permanent structure.

Freedom of participation was the foundation of this new order. Lenin rejected the idea that socialism could be built through coercion from above. He wrote that "socialism cannot be decreed; it must be created by the masses themselves." The revolution was to awaken initiative, not suppress it. Every worker was to become an administrator, every citizen a participant in the planning and management of production. Without the self-activity of millions, he said, socialism would become a shell without life — the outer form of revolution with the content of despotism.

This vision contrasts absolutely with the North Korean system. There, the people have no soviets, no councils, no organs of self-rule. The state dominates every sphere of existence, from the economy to private life. Participation is limited to ritual affirmation of decisions made above. The dictatorship of the proletariat has become the dictatorship over the proletariat. Where Lenin called for equality between officials and workers, North Korea enforces hierarchy; where he demanded the right of criticism and recall, it imposes silence and fear. The soviets, which were to be the instruments of liberation, have been replaced by a bureaucratic machine that uses the name of the people to rule them.

Lenin also foresaw that the state, as an instrument of coercion, must **disappear** once its function was fulfilled. He described the future communist society as one in which "the need for special machinery of coercion will vanish," and administration would become "so simple that it will be performed by everyone in turn." This disappearance was not to be a distant dream but a process already beginning within the revolutionary transition. Each reduction in hierarchy, each expansion of self-management, was to be a step toward communism. The North Korean model reverses this movement entirely: instead of diminishing, the state has expanded until it envelops every aspect of life. It demands perpetual loyalty, not temporary necessity. It does not prepare for its disappearance, but sanctifies its eternity.

The difference between Lenin's communism and North Korea's Stalinistic system is therefore not one of degree but of nature. Lenin's communism is based on *activity*; the North Korean system is based on *obedience*. Lenin's communism is founded on *democracy from below*; the North Korean system is *bureaucracy from above*. Lenin's communism seeks the

*disappearance of the state*; the North Korean system seeks its *permanent domination*. What Lenin saw as a means toward freedom, the bureaucracy has turned into an end in itself.

Lenin's insistence on the disappearance of the state was not a utopian hope but a practical necessity. He understood that socialism could not coexist with the perpetuation of coercion. If the state remained above the people, it would develop its own interests and become a new form of oppression. That is precisely what occurred in all Stalinistic systems. The state, which was to serve as a tool of emancipation, became a self-sustaining organism — a bureaucratic body feeding on the labor of the people. Its officials became a new class, guarding their power with ideology and force.

True communism, as Lenin defined it, is the opposite of this. It is a stage where the distinction between rulers and ruled disappears, where social cooperation replaces command, and where the management of things replaces the domination of persons. It is not the concentration of power but its diffusion; not the worship of authority but the awakening of collective intelligence. It is a society without exploitation, without coercion, and without the machinery of domination that characterizes all class rule.

Thus, Lenin's true communism requires three essential elements: Soviets — direct organs of workers' power and self-government, replacing the bureaucratic state. Free participation — the active involvement of all citizens in social and economic administration, ensuring that power remains with the people. Disappearance of the state — the gradual dissolution of coercive authority as the masses take control of their lives and society governs itself.

North Korea fulfills none of these conditions. It possesses neither soviets nor free participation; its state does not disappear but expands. The absence of these elements explains why its system, though covered in the language of socialism, embodies the substance of oppression. The lesson is clear: socialism without workers' democracy is not socialism but its negation. The path toward true communism must therefore begin where North Korea's path ended — with the return of power to the workers themselves, to the soviets, to the free association of human beings who create their own future without masters or bureaucrats.

A genuine socialist reconstruction must begin with the reawakening of the principle that has been buried under Stalinism and bureaucratic domination: that the emancipation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself. The rebuilding of socialism requires the restoration of workers' control over production, political life, and social organization. It demands the rebirth of equality not as a slogan, but as a living relation among people. It calls for collective administration, in which every person takes part in the management of society and no one stands above the rest.

Workers' control means that those who labor determine the conditions and direction of their work. The factories, farms, offices, and schools must be governed by councils chosen by the workers themselves, not by appointees of a party or ministry. Decisions concerning production, distribution, and planning must arise from below, through discussion and collective agreement. This is not chaos, as bureaucrats claim, but the highest form of organization — one based on conscious cooperation rather than imposed obedience. The

worker who plans, decides, and evaluates his labor ceases to be an instrument and becomes a creator. Only then does labor regain its dignity and social meaning.

Equality must be re-established not as a declaration but as a material fact. Under genuine socialism, all privileges of rank and office must disappear. The administrators, coordinators, and representatives of the people must live as the people live, sharing their work, their housing, their rations, and their difficulties. The separation between mental and manual labor must be overcome through education and rotation of functions. Every worker must learn to govern, and every official must return to productive labor. This equality in life and function was the essence of Marx's and Lenin's vision — the antidote to the rise of bureaucracy. Only when those who make decisions live under the same conditions as those affected by them can power cease to corrupt.

Collective administration, in turn, must replace the vertical command of the bureaucratic state with horizontal cooperation among freely associated producers. The councils of workers, peasants, and intellectuals must coordinate their activity through congresses and assemblies where delegates are elected, recallable, and bound by the decisions of their base. Planning must become transparent and participatory, reflecting the needs of all rather than the will of a few. Communication between industries, regions, and communities must replace orders from ministries. In such a system, the function of coordination becomes an act of service, not domination.

The reintroduction of collective administration would also transform the nature of the state. Instead of standing above society as a power of command, the state would dissolve into the network of councils and associations that express the collective will. The armed forces would cease to be a separate caste; defense would become the responsibility of the people themselves, organized as a citizen militia. The police, the secret agencies, and the hierarchies of command would vanish along with the conditions that produced them. The disappearance of coercion would not mean disorder but the birth of genuine social order — an order based on cooperation and solidarity rather than fear.

The reconstruction of socialism also requires a revolution in consciousness. Decades of authoritarian rule have taught people to obey rather than to think, to await commands rather than to act. The new socialist society must therefore re-educate humanity not through indoctrination, but through participation. Education must teach science, history, and dialectical thought, freeing the mind from superstition and dogma. The creative capacities of the people must be released, for only free minds can build a free society. Marx wrote that the first act of the revolution is to "raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class," but that this class, once victorious, must begin to dissolve itself into the whole of humanity. This process begins with the conscious awakening of each individual as a thinker, a participant, and a creator.

In the economic sphere, workers' control and collective planning would transform production from a mechanism of command into an act of cooperation. The purpose of production would no longer be the accumulation of surplus for a privileged class, nor the pursuit of abstract quotas, but the satisfaction of human needs. Planning would be guided by the principle of

use-value, not exchange value, ensuring that resources serve life rather than domination. In such a society, productivity would increase not through coercion but through enthusiasm, for labor freely undertaken is more productive than labor performed under fear.

The reconstruction of socialism also requires the renewal of solidarity — the unity of workers across regions and nations. Isolation must be replaced by mutual exchange, learning, and cooperation. The false doctrine of national self-sufficiency must give way to the international cooperation that Marx and Lenin saw as the foundation of communism. A workers' society cannot live enclosed within borders, for socialism is by nature universal. True communism can only exist as a global community of free producers, sharing their knowledge, labor, and achievements for the benefit of all.

Thus, a genuine socialist reconstruction must rebuild the very foundations destroyed by the bureaucratic deviation. It must restore power to those who produce, re-establish equality in life and work, and replace the state's domination with the collective administration of society. It must awaken the consciousness of the people as the masters of their own destiny. Only through this process can socialism recover its original meaning — not as the rule of a party or a leader, but as the self-government of humanity.

In this sense, the path toward true communism is not a return to the past but a renewal of the revolution's essence. It is the rediscovery of what Marx and Lenin truly taught: that freedom cannot be commanded, equality cannot be decreed, and socialism cannot exist without the conscious, organized, and creative participation of the people themselves. The rebirth of socialism begins not in the offices of power, but in the collective will of those who labor, think, and act together for a world without masters.

The existence of Stalinistic systems such as North Korea has done more to harm the world's understanding of Marxism than any open attack from capitalism ever could. While capitalism denounces socialism as its declared enemy, Stalinism poisons socialism from within — it carries the red flag while betraying what that flag means. It turns the ideas of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, which were conceived as the science of human liberation, into a doctrine of domination. As a result, the name of Marxism has been tied not to freedom and equality, but to tyranny and fear.

Marxism entered history as a theory of the working class's self-emancipation — a movement grounded in science, democracy, and internationalism. It opposed all forms of exploitation and authority that divide humanity. Its goal was not to replace one ruling class with another, but to end class rule altogether. Lenin, following Marx, sought to make these principles practical: to build a revolution in which the workers themselves would take control of production and the state, and in which the state would soon begin to disappear. Yet the rise of Stalinism — first in the Soviet Union, later in states modeled upon it — reversed this process and gave the world a caricature of socialism.

North Korea represents the extreme form of this falsification. The bureaucracy that rules in the name of the working class reproduces all the features of the old oppression: inequality, coercion, censorship, and privilege. Yet it cloaks these realities in Marxist language. The very

words that once inspired workers — revolution, socialism, equality — are used to justify their subjugation. The state that claims to serve the people instead commands them, and the people who are told they are sovereign live as subjects of a hereditary dynasty. This contradiction confuses and discredits the Marxist idea itself.

To the outside world, North Korea and similar regimes appear as the living example of "communism." Their existence allows capitalism to equate socialism with dictatorship, bureaucracy, and misery. The Western bourgeoisie, which profits from exploitation, needs no stronger argument against Marxism than the spectacle of these distorted states. Each failure of a Stalinistic system is used to proclaim the "failure of Marxism" itself. Thus, the crimes of bureaucratic rule become the weapon by which capitalism defends its own injustices. The bureaucracy, though it proclaims anti-capitalism, serves capitalism's ideological needs better than any open defender of the market.

This global confusion has deep historical roots. When Stalinism triumphed over the revolutionary democracy of Lenin, the world communist movement ceased to be a movement of liberation and became a network of state-controlled parties. Independent workers' movements were suppressed, criticism was silenced, and the unity of the international proletariat was replaced by subservience to bureaucratic states. Marxism, once a living science, was reduced to official formulas repeated by parties that served their respective governments. This process destroyed the moral and intellectual credibility of socialism in the eyes of millions.

North Korea's existence perpetuates this damage in its purest form. Its rigid dogma, its closed borders, and its cult of obedience appear to the world as the essence of Marxism, when in truth they are its negation. The image of starving workers forced to worship a supreme leader is not merely an internal tragedy; it is a global one. It teaches the world to associate communism with unfreedom, to see socialism as tyranny, and to believe that collective ownership must lead to despotism. In this way, Stalinism not only oppresses its own people but also delays the emancipation of humanity by distorting the meaning of Marx's and Lenin's ideas.

This distortion is so effective because it inverts the truth while using its language. Marx spoke of the workers' self-emancipation; the bureaucracy speaks of "people's power" while denying it. Lenin described the temporary use of state power as a step toward its disappearance; the bureaucracy proclaims the eternity of its rule. Marxism teaches international solidarity; Stalinism preaches national isolation and self-reliance. Marxism calls for the abolition of hierarchy; Stalinism glorifies hierarchy under the mask of unity. Each of these inversions transforms a principle of liberation into a justification of control.

The consequences of this falsification reach far beyond Korea. In every capitalist country, the ruling class points to Stalinistic regimes as proof that socialism means tyranny. Workers who might otherwise look to Marxism as a guide to their own liberation turn away, believing it to be synonymous with the horrors they see on the world stage. The moral authority of socialism is undermined, and the energy of revolution is diverted into despair or reformism. Thus,

Stalinism serves as capitalism's greatest ideological ally while pretending to be its fiercest enemy.

Yet the damage is not irreversible. The very contrast between the ideals of Marxism and the realities of Stalinistic states reveals the path to renewal. When people see that those regimes bear no resemblance to the principles of workers' democracy, equality, and international solidarity, they begin to rediscover the true content of communism. The exposure of Stalinism becomes itself an act of revolutionary clarification. By separating Marxism from its bureaucratic distortions, the movement for human liberation can reclaim its rightful meaning — as the science and practice of collective freedom, not as the politics of domination.

The lesson of North Korea, therefore, is not that socialism has failed, but that its falsification has triumphed for a time. The task of Marxists everywhere is to restore clarity: to show that communism is not the rule of a few over the many, but the end of all rule; not the suppression of individuality, but its flowering through community; not the perpetuation of the state, but its disappearance. Only by reclaiming this truth can humanity overcome the confusion sown by Stalinism and resume the real march toward liberation.

The international significance of the North Korean deviation lies precisely here. It demonstrates that socialism cannot survive as an isolated state or a bureaucratic command system. It must live as an international movement, democratic in form and scientific in method. When it ceases to be that, it ceases to be Marxism. Thus, to rebuild the world's understanding of Marxism, the socialist movement must draw a clear line between the thought of Marx and Lenin and the falsifications that speak their names. The red banners must again stand for human freedom, not for fear.

The scientific conclusion that emerges from the study of North Korea's experience is clear and unavoidable: true Marxism is not obedience, but liberation. It is not the worship of leaders, but the conscious self-rule of the working class. It is not the construction of a bureaucratic machine over the people, but the abolition of all machines of domination. Marxism, as a science of social development and as a movement of human emancipation, aims at the end of exploitation in every form — whether under the flag of capital or under the banner of a false socialism.

The suffering of the Korean people under a system that calls itself socialist reveals the depth of betrayal that Stalinism inflicted on Marx's and Lenin's thought. A state that forces its citizens into silence, hunger, and servitude in the name of revolution has ceased to be revolutionary. It has transformed the means of liberation into instruments of oppression. In North Korea, the language of socialism has been preserved, but its content has been emptied. The result is a tragedy where words once symbolizing hope — "people's power," "collective good," "comrade" — have been turned into tools of submission.

Marx's communism begins from the recognition that the working class must free itself by its own activity. No savior, no leader, no state can deliver emancipation on behalf of the people. The idea that liberation can be granted from above contradicts the very foundation of materialist thought. For Marx, history is made by human beings in their collective struggle

against exploitation. Engels affirmed that the state, far from being eternal, is a passing form destined to disappear when class domination ends. Lenin repeated that socialism is the “free association of producers,” where administration becomes the daily task of everyone, not the privilege of a few.

The Stalinistic system of North Korea inverts every one of these principles. It declares that the people are free while keeping them under surveillance. It claims to abolish classes while preserving a privileged elite. It invokes Marx’s name while suppressing Marx’s idea — that the workers themselves must command their destiny. This is not Marxism, but its negation; not communism, but feudalism reborn under red banners. The very structure of the system — the hereditary leadership, the bureaucratic caste, the militarized state — is the mirror image of what Lenin struggled against in his lifetime.

From the standpoint of scientific socialism, the North Korean tragedy demonstrates that the form of the state cannot substitute for its content. A government that nationalizes property but leaves the people powerless is not socialist, for ownership without control is illusion. True socialization exists only where the producers collectively manage production, distribution, and the direction of social life. Without this self-activity, without soviets, without democracy, the state becomes a new exploiter — a parasite that feeds on the people while proclaiming itself their guardian.

The lesson is not limited to one country. It concerns the entire future of the workers’ movement. Whenever socialism abandons democracy, it ceases to be socialism. Whenever revolution is replaced by obedience, the revolution dies. Whenever theory becomes dogma, it serves the oppressor instead of the oppressed. The path of Marx, Engels, and Lenin is therefore not one of worship or imitation, but of constant critical renewal — the use of thought to liberate thought, the use of organization to abolish domination, the use of struggle to achieve peace.

To restore true Marxism is to restore its method: dialectical materialism — the study of contradictions within society and the conscious effort to resolve them through collective action. It is to return to the principle that human beings, through their own labor and understanding, can transform the world. It is to affirm that the goal of communism is not merely the end of poverty, but the end of alienation — the awakening of humanity’s creative power in every person. Such a vision has nothing in common with the rigid, fear-ridden world of North Korean bureaucracy. It is as far from that tyranny as freedom is from slavery.

The suffering of the Korean people under Stalinistic rule stands as a warning to all who seek liberation. It shows that the greatest danger to socialism lies not in external enemies, but in the corruption of its own principles. When the state ceases to serve as a tool of the workers and becomes their master, when leaders demand faith instead of criticism, when the living movement of the masses is replaced by ritual, socialism is lost. The return to Marx, Engels, and Lenin is therefore not nostalgia, but necessity — the recovery of the scientific, revolutionary path that alone can lead to human freedom.

True Marxism recognizes that history belongs to those who labor. Its purpose is not to produce new rulers, but to end the very existence of rulers. Its victory will come not when one nation claims to be socialist, but when humanity itself has abolished the divisions that make domination possible. The lesson of North Korea is that the red banner must not conceal power, but symbolize the collective awakening of all workers across the world. Only when the people think, organize, and govern for themselves will communism become reality — not the rule of a state, but the freedom of humankind.

Thus, the scientific conclusion is that Marxism's truth lies not in obedience, but in liberation; not in the eternity of the state, but in its disappearance; not in the cult of authority, but in the conscious unity of free and equal workers. The suffering of North Korea must serve as a reminder that socialism without democracy is a lie, and revolution without freedom is a corpse. The future belongs to those who restore the original path of Marx, Engels, and Lenin — the path of workers' rule, human equality, and universal freedom.